EMBODYING PRAXIS: IMPROVING SOCIAL JUSTICE PRACTICES IN THE WISCONSIN BAPTIST PASTORS CONFERENCE

Rolen Lewis Womack Jr., DMin

BA, Texas Southern University, 1988
MDiv, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993

Mentor

Wyatt Tee Walker

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Rolen Lewis Womack Jr.

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Wyatt Tee Walker, D. Min.

Date:_____

Approved:

Mentor: _____

Dean, Doctoral Studies and Global Distance Education: _____

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ABSTRACT

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by

Rolen Lewis Womack Jr.

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Mentor

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This final document is the culmination of a project that was designed to address the issue of social justice and social activism in the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A questionnaire was developed and implemented to evaluate and assess to what degree social justice is a viable biblical mandate for the conference. Three seminars and two sermons were also developed to reinforce the biblical mandate for the practice of social justice by the church. The results of the model were evaluated by qualitative analysis, and they indicated the context surveyed believed social justice had a biblical context. But very few of the churches had social ministries in place. A paradigm was then developed to move the context from proclamation to practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project is a result of the grace of God and the people who encouraged me with their kind words and prayer.

I am deeply indebted to the congregation of the Progressive Baptist Church of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Their support, spiritually and financially, to this endeavor demonstrated their love and concern for their pastor. I am eternally grateful for my trustees, especially Carolyn Parker, Judy Johnson and Sheila Felder, for their unwavering support of this process.

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INTRODUCTION

James Baldwin said,"The country's image of the Negro, which hasn't very much to do with the Negro, has never failed to reflect, with a kind of frightening accuracy, the state of mind of the country".[i] This project deals with the realities of church ministry in an urban environment. The context is the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference of Milwaukee which, according to the 1990 census, is one of the most racially divided and polarized cities in the entire nation. Milwaukee is so segregated -- over ninety percent of the African-American population are concentrated in the central city -- that they had to develop a new phrase to describe its condition, hyper-segregated.

This beautiful city has a central core that has all the characteristics of a de-militarized war zone. The infant mortality rates are of third world proportions. There are extremely high poverty rates for children, and systemic teenage pregnancy rates. The public schools are plagued with high dropout rates, and according to the 1995 federal labor records, African-American unemployment is four and one half times that of the white residents, while the national average is two times higher than whites. Drugs like crack cocaine have helped to escalate the violence and the deterioration of neighborhoods.

There is also a large inventory of substandard housing, rampant redlining, pervasive disinvestment, and politicians and/or political system that seems to have forgotten and even forsaken the central city residents. This city has major

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[1] Janet Cheatham Bell, Victory of the Spirit:Meditations On Black Quotations (New York: Warner Books, 1996), 97.

problems and the cry of "Where is God in this situation," can be heard across the spacious green boulevards. This paper and project asks a serious question; "Where are the pastor-preachers in this process?" Are they suffering from a general malaise in the midst of this pandemic suffering? Is there a contagious lassitude and listlessness in the community of prophets and priests when it comes to social justice controversies and calamities?

This project seeks these answers from the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference, which is comprised of some of the large and affluent churches in this city. Is there a word from the Lord in this situation of oppression and injustice? Does God speak to pastor-preachers about justice issues since he is the God of justice? What about Jesus, didn't He come to a world similar to this world, a world where oppression and injustice was the normative behavior, and tell the people that He came to set the captives free. Is there a biblical mandate for Christian social activism in the midst of all this injustice, brokenness, oppression, and institutional racism?

Chapter One gives the reader a picture of the world the researcher was nurtured in, by way of his spiritual autobiography, and defines the area of ministry or context the model is addressing. This chapter also reveals why the author selected this area of concentration, and how it intersects his life and speaks to his ministry.

Chapter Two uncovers the author's grasp of the research in this model of ministry and addresses the relevant research on which the model is built. In a narrative analysis the author shares his findings in the social justice ministry arenas, including those persons whom he feels represent the models for this paradigm of ministry.

Chapter Three is the theoretical foundation on which this model is to be constructed. This chapter delves into the theological, biblical, spiritual, and historical focus of this work. This chapter explores the possibilities of the scriptural text as seen through the eyes of an array of theological experts and exegetical giants. The corpus of this chapter becomes the foundation for the paper.

Chapter Four describes the model design and research methodology used in the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference field experience. The Milwaukee situation is researched and the strategy is set forth. The section provides the reader with a look at the heart and head of the project.

Chapter Five is a record of the field experience and how the project was implemented. In this chapter I have evaluated and interpreted the findings in the Milwaukee religious community context.

Chapter Six is a reflection of the project, and it provides a summary statement of the research in which the conclusion is drawn. This section contains what the researcher believes is a useful paradigm for Christian social activism.

CHAPTER ONE

ROLEN LEWIS WOMACK JR.

Ministry Focus

This project is the author's response to the apathy for social justice issues which seems to have become a part of the African-American church experience in Milwaukee. As the president of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference, and one of the church leaders in the city of Milwaukee, the author is not immune to the pain of institutional racism. He has personally experienced the trauma of social injustice, and he believes that most of the African-American residents of Milwaukee have suffered the indignity of social injustice. It is so ingrained in the city, that it is virtually impossible to go about one's daily business without constant reminders of the status of African-American people in this community.

The problems as they relate to social justice in Milwaukee often manifest themselves in the institutions and human agencies of the municipality. When the people in the author's congregation experience problems navigating these social systems, they are encouraged to notify the pastor of their difficulties. In the African-American ministry context, pastors serve as the conduit for information and they are often called upon to be the spokesperson for those who are unwilling or unable to speak for themselves. Not only are they expected to perform the normal duties of preaching, teaching, praying, counseling, pastoral care, and the administration of the church; they are also called upon to be transformational in the public and private sectors of sick inner city communities.

This idea of pastoral leadership being transformational outside of the walls of the local church, seems to have lost its momentum as our social problems have escalated.

There appears to be a retreat from addressing the social crises which are a large part of the current urban landscape. Yes, preachers still preach about them, especially when they celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday and African-American History month in February. But is there a concrete effort from pastoral leaders to go beyond preaching about the social justice, into practicing social justice? Pastors should feel a personal responsibility to ensure that those who are members of their worshiping community receive justice in all facets of their lives.

The author's personal responsibility for the lives of his congregants is defined by his understanding of Jesus Christ's model for ministry and the social implications it has for his context. Jesus Christ came into a world where the occupants suffered from oppression and political upheaval, and He had to address religious leaders who were controlled by the political and military complex. The author believes the people in this community face the same kind of challenges, which are further complicated by crime, crack cocaine, isolation, segregation, and alcohol abuse. If the church is really the church of Jesus Christ, the author's theology calls for him to change structural evil wherever it exists.

This call to ministry has placed him at the center of this country's African Diaspora. He is in a position where he finds it impossible to ignore the systemic racism which is in the very fabric of American life. The African-American church has always been the institutional incubator for social change in America, because it is solely owned by African-Americans. But in this new age it appears that the African-American church has neglected its role as an agent for social change. Maybe some church leaders feel the church has accomplished all of its goals, as it relates to social justice and freedom issues? Maybe some church leaders feel they don't have the proper training to effect social change in their context? Maybe some leaders are just tired of the debate? For whatever reasons many of the church leaders in Milwaukee appear to be more comfortable proclaiming the need for social justice, rather than practicing social justice ministries.

This ministry has concentrated on investigating the perceived disparity between the practice of social justice ministry and the proclamation of social justice ministry. Since the author is a local pastor and the president of the ministerial conference, the chosen context for examination is the ministerial conference. An attempt has been made to determine if there is a connection between the conference members' understanding of the biblical mandate and social justice. The author's experience as an African-American groomed in the hostile racial environment of America is a reminder that God is active in his social situation.

The author's experience as a child of the sixties revolution, when the parameters of social justice were confronted and expanded by religious activists, provides the undergirding for his vision of ministry. The activist pastor model exemplified by Martin Luther King Jr., Wyatt Tee Walker, Jesse Jackson, and others, serves as a link between the past victories and the present realities. Since the author identifies closely with these leaders, he has attempted to interpret their models for ministry in his context. This project is an outgrowth of his attempt to live out the biblical mandate for social justice as modeled by his heroes. It is his hope that this project will enlighten his context and help them as they attempt to perform ministry in the hostile environment of inner city Milwaukee.

Finally, a discussion of his personal experiences is in order, because they have helped to shape him and give him special insights into his area of ministry. The author's spiritual autobiography will be discussed, his context will be analyzed, and he will attempt to bring them together in synergy.

Spiritual Journey

I am Rolen Lewis Womack Jr., the first child of an eighteen year old couple, born in Houston, Texas. My young parents were not high school graduates but they provided an environment where reading, writing, and other intellectual pursuits were strongly

encouraged. My parents made great sacrifices for me and my five siblings, as they demonstrated to us that we could rise above our circumstance. They instilled in me a strong sense of self and gave me a hint of arrogance to use as a tool for survival in America. There was always plenty of food to eat, ample clothes to wear, and places to visit on vacations and trips.

My parents expected me to do my best in school because I would be the model for my brothers and sisters who would follow me through the same school system. They stressed education as a tool for us to better ourselves. Four of my siblings have college educations. Three of us have completed masters level degrees. The Womacks have done well educationally and economically, because of my parents' belief in the education process. My father believed that a good education was so important that he was willing to totally finance all of his children's education without the benefits of loans and grants.

My parents' major requirement for their children was not church attendance, but hard work. We were expected to have jobs and earn money to buy any extras we wanted. So I worked my way through school. I started working at the age of twelve and I can't remember when I have not been gainfully employed. There was structure in my life, I never suffered the indignities which are normally associated with growing up in the south. My parents protected us from racism as best they could and they allowed us to mature without the emotional scars of racism.

My parents practiced religion and acknowledged the presence of God, but they did not attend church. Before I went to work at the age of twelve, my church attendance was irregular at best. My mother had grown up in the Catholic Church and my father was baptized in the Baptist Church, so there was an atmosphere of disagreement about the churches. My mother said she would never attend a Baptist church and my father refused to travel across town to the nearest Catholic church. Compromise was not the order of the day, so there was never mandatory church attendance for me. My paternal

grandmother was a great churchwoman, but my parents assumed all of the care and responsibility for my upbringing.

I left home at eighteen years of age on my way to attend school at a small Methodist college known for educating the children of Methodist ministers. I became friends with a number of these preacher's kids, and started attending a local church. It was a new and enjoyable experience for me and the beginning of a long journey. I did not join a church, but I attended church with my friends and developed a sense of who God was.

Within two years I had married, dropped out of college, and we were expecting the birth of our first daughter. After my daughter was born I knew that I would have to make tough decisions. Even though I did not attend church while growing up, I felt an obligation to provide a Christian church experience for my child. But I faced a very tough problem. I had grown to like the Methodist church and my wife had been a member of the Baptist church all her life. My wife disliked the Methodist church and there was no way on this earth I would attend one of those Baptist churches. The perfect compromise was the local Episcopal church.

We spent eighteen wonderful years as members of this small affluent congregation, with its Ivy League-educated pastor. I worked hard in this church and eventually became its top lay official. I became a licensed lay reader and conducted services when our priest was away. I loved this church, it was fun, not too demanding, and there were never any budget problems. People were not a problem either, this was a small family church, without any intention to grow and serve the community at large. In retrospect I am not sure I knew God, but I was comfortable in my little world until a friend invited me to a revival at the historic Antioch Baptist Church in Houston, Texas.

I possessed a lot of misgivings and misconceptions about the Baptist church. My greatest problem with the African-American Baptist church was the stereotype of an ill-equipped, non-trained, non-intellectual preacher who used all of the church's resources for

his personal benefit. Dr. Harry S. Wright of the Cornerstone Baptist Church of Brooklyn, New York, changed all of this on a hot and humid night during the summer of 1982. Dr. Wright totally destroyed all of the myths I brought to the table. Dr. Wright met me on my intellectual level, and preached to my soul. He preached a sermon entitled, "Judas: An Honorable Name," and proceeded to give us a reading list of the books which had affected his meditation on the subject. After fifteen years, I can still preach this powerful sermon.

Interestingly this life changing event was not intentional. I never intended to attend a revival and surely not one at a Baptist church. But this friend who worked with me, would walk past by my desk and tell me African-Americans were not Episcopalians, and then act like he couldn't pronounce "Episcopalian". This went on for months until I finally consented to go to church with him. But he didn't take me to his church, he took me to Harry Wright's revival at another church. And to overcome my objections about the time Baptist people took to have church services, we went to dinner first, skipped the devotional part of the services, arriving at the church just when Dr. Wright was preparing to preach. My life has not been the same, for it was at this moment that my life was transformed by the preaching of the gospel.

Dr. Wright and his message were constantly on my mind. I struggled and wondered about what direction my life would take, and while the struggling was going on, there were other changes taking place in life. My mother-in-law was slowly dying of cancer, which resulted in her death a year later. The pain and suffering she experienced became the catalyst I needed to speed up the changes that were already taking place in my life. I left the Episcopal church and became a member of a small Baptist church, this church provided a great growing experience for me and I was baptized in the Baptist church that summer. This baptism was a great event for me and my family, and it symbolized the change that I had made in my life.

After I joined this Baptist church, I recognized the humor of God. The church I left had a Princeton-educated pastor and I considered myself an intellectual. The church I

joined had a bi-vocational pastor who was not adept at reading. In spite of the changes in my church situation, I felt God had called me to this church. This new church situation was a big change, but God was not finished with me yet.

It was while polishing my shoes in my garage, in November of 1983, I received a call from God to enter the preaching ministry. I was so emotionally torn up over this, I couldn't stop crying. I spoke with my wife and she called the assistant pastor and told him of my calling. He called and talked to me about my condition, but I still couldn't stop crying. I had to go to work, but I was too emotionally distraught to get dressed and go to work.

The assistant pastor told me to tell God I would do whatever He wanted me to do, and I would experience some relief. I did and God granted me some relief. But I never intended to follow through with this preaching business. I felt I had too much to lose. I had just purchased a second brand new Mercedes Benz for my wife, and I was driving a fancy sports car. I had just built a new four bedroom, three and one half bathroom home, and I wasn't interested in a drastic lifestyle change. I was a very successful salesman with a large social agenda, and a high commission sales job.

I believed that most of the people whom God called into the preaching ministry were "down on their luck individuals," who were experiencing some kind of social or economic crisis in their lives. I believed preaching was another enterprise for a poor African-American person to make a living, and the only crisis he experienced was an unwillingness to work. I had this stereotypical idea of the ministry which had been informed by some of the preachers I had encountered in my youth.

I didn't know it, but I was experiencing a crisis in my life. My problem was not with drugs or alcohol, it was not with spending all my money on women and a good time. I was a diligent husband and father to my wife and children. I made sure they were well provided for: the best schools, the best houses, the best clothes, the best vacations. I even

drove car pools and made their breakfast every morning. I brought my check home and took care of my business, which was my family.

But I didn't care for other people, I believed that everyone should work hard and take care of themselves. I never offered to help anyone, outside of my family. My life was in crisis and I was much too selfish. I let my material possessions stand in the way of what God wanted me to do. But God wouldn't let me rest. He kept on speaking to me, and I continued to cry about it, lying to God, without any intention of doing what God wanted me to do. Finally after months of misery, I went before the church and confessed my calling and preached my first sermon on May 7, 1985. God was too big for me and He won. I also won because God changed my heart.

Stewardship of Ministry

As you noticed I used the phrase, stewardship of ministry. This phrase, stewardship of ministry, refers to the working out of my call to ministry, in faithfulness to God. Now when I look at my stewardship of ministry I have to look at my church. Seven people wanted to start a new church, and they issued a call for me to become their pastor and organize them into a church. This new church was named Progressive Baptist Church and had its first meeting in the basement of my home, on the fourth Sunday in October, 1988. By the second Sunday in February, 1989, I had secured a church building for us to meet in, without any money. By August of the same year, I negotiated the purchase of the same building, which is valued at over a half million dollars, without any money down and an interest rate two points below prime. I have taken us from the original seven members to over two hundred and fifty members, despite our far western and almost suburban location. The church is located in an area where less than five percent of people are African American or any other minority, according to the six census tracts which surround the church.

The church grew while I worked on a full time job for the first two years. And it grew while I attended Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Illinois, and continued to serve them. The commute from my home is one hundred and twenty miles, one way. I commuted over eighty thousand miles in three and one-half years and earned a Master of Divinity degree. All of this was done while I served on the boards of a nursing home, the local boy's clubs, and the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. During my last year of seminary, I also served as the resident teacher of theology for the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference.

My ministry has always included a social component. The Progressive Church under my leadership has organized and maintained one of the largest food pantries and clothing banks in Milwaukee. The church also organized and sponsors a sickle cell benefit art show for this community, and provides scholarships and grants for the church's college students. The social ministry focus has helped Progressive to provide technological education for the church members. For the church to continue its social ministry focus a strategic plan was developed for the church, with emphasis on developing more social ministries.

The Progressive Baptist Church is an institution for Christian growth and development, with a mission to use its resources to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation and the community at large. This social focus is grounded on the fact that the foundation of this church is Jesus Christ and His disciples. Following the cooperative paradigm of ministry set forth by Jesus and His disciples, we believe that our church can contribute to social transformation by working together. This working together allows the church to maintain ethical integrity. It also calls the leaders to model behaviors which through the spirit of Jesus can have a profound effect on the members of the church.

Given the Christian social activist outlook, the Progressive Church has four basic ministry functions within its context. The first mission of this church is always proclamation, which is telling people the truth about the life of Jesus Christ. The second

mission is conversion, getting unbelievers to become committed disciples of Jesus Christ. The third mission is to nurture, assisting disciples to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. The fourth mission is outreach, getting disciples to witness to others and serve Jesus Christ. At Progressive members are taught that they must experience a life of meditation, prayer, fasting, study, humility, quiet, obedience, service, repentance, worship, guidance, and celebration.

Progressive is developing a new paradigm for churches in Milwaukee. This paradigm encourages collaboration between the pulpit and the pew. It also encourages collaboration between churches who share similar beliefs regarding spiritual formation. Since the idea of spiritual formation at Progressive Church is a response to the Christ event as it is manifested in the Milwaukee context, it seeks fellow Christians who will take the active spirit of Jesus Christ into the world. This orientation is impacted by our understanding of the spiritual formation of Jesus Christ as found in Luke's gospel 19:41; "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it". Jesus weeping over the city speaks to this church's context. It indicates Jesus was suffering some pain over their predicament. This also means that our paradigm calls forth an empathetic ministry.

Church leaders who model Jesus' ministry, often minister to others out of their pain. They minister out of the pain of marital struggles, out of the pain of alcohol or drug addiction struggles, and out of the pain of poverty and racism and the indelible imprint it leaves on lives. They minister out of the pain of split churches, past failures in ministry, and failed churches. They minister out of the pain of broken relationships and depression, often wanting to quit the church. Jesus' crying over Jerusalem resonates with me, because our situational pain creates the energy to do something to make the life of others better. But we must first get beyond the hurt, to be able to help others.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Progressive Baptist Church is located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which is often called the great city by the great lake. Milwaukee is truly one of the unique cities in America. It is noted for its beer, bratwurst and bowling. It is often called the city of festivals, and most residents would describe it as a good place to raise a family. The city of Milwaukee is a working class community with a blue collar attitude. It is foremost a factory town, full of tradesmen and unionists. Milwaukee is a traditional and typical rust belt community in need of a campaign to clean it up and elevate its brew town image. Milwaukee is surrounded and landlocked by affluent white suburbs. The city itself is divided by Interstate highway 94, the east and west freeway.

This freeway naturally divides the city and serves as a boundary and buffer zone between the predominantly African-American north side and the largely European-American south side. This is truly one of the most divided and racially polarized cities in the country. Milwaukee suffers from hyper-segregation, with over ninety percent of the African-Americans concentrated in the central city.

Milwaukee's infant mortality rates are as high as those in third world developing countries. The number of children living in poverty is one of the highest in the nation, and the teenage pregnancy rate is the highest in the nation, according to national statistics. Children are leaving school in record numbers, leading to a public school dropout rate which is one of the highest in the land, according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* newspaper. [1]

Milwaukee suffers from other problems related to its segregated status. The African-American unemployment rate in the central city is over twenty-five percent according to the Milwaukee Urban League, compared to the white unemployment rate of less than six percent. The central city has experienced massive redlining in mortgage lending and insurance coverage. The federal government recently settled an insurance

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[1] Joe Williams, "Milwaukee Public Schools Report Card", Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 1 July 1996, sec 1A.

redlining lawsuit against the state's largest homeowners insurance company for fourteen million dollars. The city's public schools are troubled and in dire need of additional classroom space. There also appears to be a lack of genuine economic opportunity for those who reside in the central city.

Milwaukee, like most of the urban centers in this country, is in the process of building a new two hundred and fifty million dollar state of the art baseball stadium. This stadium is funded by a multi-county sales tax that the state government didn't put before the voters in a referendum. Milwaukee has just completed a new state of the art jail, which has been made obsolete after only two years by inmate overcrowding. There are also grand plans to build a new state prison in the city.

But the public school children in the city attend classes in converted coat rooms and closets because there is no money for building new schools, or even for the proper maintenance of the old school buildings. Two years ago a referendum to build fourteen new schools and to make additions to a number of other schools was turned down. The African-American north side of Milwaukee where the additional classroom space is most needed voted for the referendum and the white south side voted against it.

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the only local newspaper, just completed a seven day series on the problems in the public schools, placing the blame for their failure directly on the teachers unions. They carefully failed to mention the pervasive social conditions of the neighborhoods and their connection to the alarming failure rates, truancy, and dropout rates. For some reason the newspaper didn't see the nexus between economically vibrant, good stable homes and academic achievement. A high percentage of the Milwaukee Public Schools' students are on free or reduced lunch, since the schools have become increasingly minority. The African-American community does not buy this newspaper, so there was not to be a public outcry against this kind of reporting.

Adding to all of this is Milwaukee's lack of an indigenous educated class in the African-American community. African-American executives, high ranking educators and

administrators, and professionals generally are brought in from other areas of the country. The natives of Milwaukee blame this on the generous pay and presence of high paying jobs in the many factories and breweries in the city. With an abundance of jobs available, education was not a priority, going to work was. The result is that many of the leaders in Milwaukee don't have deep roots in the community, and they treat Milwaukee as a way station on the way to greater glory and greater riches.

The Population of Milwaukee

According to the 1990 census there are 959,275 people in Milwaukee County: 718,918 are white; 195,470 are African-American; 6,994 are American Indian; 15,308 are Asian and Pacific Islander; and 22,585 are classified as other.[2] There are 628,088 people in the city of Milwaukee; 398,033 are white; 191,255 are African-American; 5,858 are American Indian; 11,817 are Asian and Pacific Islander; and 21,125 are other.

These figures add validity to the author's previous statement concerning the hyper-segregated status of this city. They show that there are 195,470 African-Americans in Milwaukee County and 191,255 of them live within the city limits of Milwaukee. There are only 4,215 African-Americans who live in the nineteen suburban municipalities which surround the city of Milwaukee, and that includes over 800 African-Americans housed in the state house of corrections located in the Milwaukee county suburban city of Franklin. The author talks more about the demographic makeup of the people in the community which surrounds Progressive Church later on in this paper.

The Church's History

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[2] Statistical Abstract of the United States 1990, 110 Edition, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991.

On October 28, 1988, Rolen Lewis Womack was invited to the home of Brother Bobby Felder. Bobby Felder had assembled six other persons, which included his wife Sheila Felder, Halton and Annie Washington, Virginia Washington, and John and Shirley Ware. Bobby Felder, who was the spokesman for the group offered Rolen Womack the position of pastor for their small mission group. In addition Felder inquired if the new pastor would take this small group of people and organize a church. Within two weeks this mission began meeting in the basement of the new pastor's home, first for Bible Study, and later for church services. But the basement was not large enough to invite others to participate in these worship services.

In December of 1988, the Rev. James Leary told the pastor about a building that could become available, but when the pastor went to look at the building, another congregation was about to move in. This preacher without a church building bowed down on his knees in the snow and cold and asked the Lord to give this building to the Progressive Church. On the second Sunday in February, Progressive moved into the building, sharing the facility with another church. By August the Progressive Church had purchased this building without any money down, with an interest rate two percentage points less than the prevailing prime rate.

Progressive Baptist Church grew out of a need for a Christ-centered church where institutional needs would never overshadow the needs of the people. The stated intention of the Progressive Church is to reach out to the people of Greater Milwaukee, with a commitment to meet the needs of both the churched and the unchurched. The mission of Progressive is not bound by social, class or racial distinctions.

Progressive Baptist Church, since its inception, has been an active member of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. and the Wisconsin Baptist State Convention. On October 20, 1995, the Progressive Church also joined the Wisconsin General Baptist State Convention and the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., and the church is now dually aligned.

The Progressive Church is a commuter church because of its location on the far west side of Milwaukee. The neighborhood surrounding the church is currently over ninety-five percent white, mainly Lutheran and Catholic, and generally over the age of fifty-five. In the last year the pattern of out-migration and in-migration has resulted in three African-American families moving into the neighborhood surrounding the church.

The African-American community has just begun to move beyond 60th Street, and Progressive is located twenty four blocks west on 84th Street. The previous patterns of out-migration and in-migration demonstrated by the census tracts, indicate it took over ten years for African-Americans to move from 47th Street to 60th Street. The leaders of the church feel that the church is in an excellent location to serve those living in this community and the future residents of the community.

The Progressive Church has two hundred and thirty resident members. Most of the members are under the age of fifty. Approximately fifty percent of the members are in attendance each Sunday, and normally the church services are well attended by visitors. Most of the members of Progressive are from Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee. Those members over forty years of age are generally first-generation residents of the city and those under forty are normally second-generation residents of the city. The membership is forty-five percent male and fifty-five percent female. Their salaries and wages indicate that they are generally middle class to upper middle class, many are college graduates, and three members are currently pursuing terminal degrees. To a lesser degree the church has a good representation of those in the skilled trades, people with high paying factory jobs, and blue collar workers.

The membership of the Progressive Church consists of people who live outside of the census tracts which surround the church. There are only two members who reside inside the church's ZIP code of 53222, and there is only one member who live in the suburbs which surround the city. The members of Progressive are not hard core inner city people or welfare recipients, but some do require help from the food pantry and clothing

bank on occasion. These two ministries afford the church an opportunity to help those inside the church and those outside the church. Progressive is truly a commuter church, and most of the members have their own transportation and are willing to come from all over the city to experience fellowship at this church.

The Ministry Context

I am currently in my eighth year as the senior pastor and moderator of the Progressive Church. My duties include me acting as the presiding official at the worship services, business and board meetings, funerals, weddings, baptisms, baby dedications, and visitations, and I also serve as an ex-officio member of all boards, committees, and auxiliaries of this church. This church functions in the true African American tradition, where the pastor is in charge of and accountable for the corporate life of the church. In this notable tradition the pastor is truly the congregation leader, but he is also encouraged and expected be a leader in the community at large.

I have served as the theological reflections leader and vice-president of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference and I am currently finishing a term as president of this organization. I have also served as the associate dean in charge of adult education in the Congress of Christian Education for state of Wisconsin. And I am serving my last term on the board of advisors for the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, while remaining active in many social and political causes in this community and city. The ministry at the Progressive Church reflects the belief that one can not separate the social and political from the spiritual.

When I did a critical analysis of why I was involved in ministry, four principal reasons were established. First, I wanted people to know about Jesus Christ and the holistic effect Jesus can have on their lives. I often struggled with the idea that my reasons for ministry should be complex, but after much reflection I realized that my reasons for

ministry were really simple. I just want people to know Jesus Christ like I know Him. I am convinced that individuals who are involved in pastoral ministry should use every opportunity to tell their history. The story of their lives before they knew Jesus Christ and since they have known Jesus Christ is an important part of their witness. I often posit that when an individual forgets their history they are doomed for failure.

After individuals have made a decision to become disciples of Jesus Christ, then my next focus is to make sure they become committed disciples of Him. The most important time I spend at the Progressive Church is spent trying to teach men and women how to become dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ. The focus is intentional; everything that is said and done is geared to build disciples. Ministry is a testimony of a lifestyle, and every incidence in the life of the church can be used as a teaching moment. Teaching is made easier when members know and understand the internal and external working of congregation life. Successful churches today generally practice full disclosure of their financial records, a mission statement of purpose, and their methods are beyond reproach.

My third focus for ministry is to nurture the members and perspective members of the Progressive Church. One of the strongest ministries at the church is the counseling ministry. Members of the church make extensive use of the counseling services offered here. This pastor's area of specialization is marriage counseling, and I also offer services in other areas of counseling. This gift of counseling God has bestowed on him is used inside and outside of the church. This pastor has had the opportunity to share this gift with other pastors, ministers, and people, both churched and unchurched.

The last focus of my ministry is to convey the importance of being a living witness to the presence of Jesus Christ in the life of the church. Milwaukee, like other urban cities, is home to some churches which appear to have lost some of their power to witness. Pastors here have been or are under indictment for felonies. The various conventions and pastoral groups are separated and divided because of power issues. The various local church groups are not united, and there seems to be a failure to focus on the

critical problems which are pandemic in the community. There is intense debate inside and outside of the religious community, on the relevancy of the church in its current form. If those in pastoral leadership positions in the churches of Milwaukee are not careful, this erosion of the church witness will continue unabated.

I often wonder if there is a direct correlation between the lack of training and education in the ministry in Milwaukee, and the problems which are systemic to a loss of witness. There are over sixty African-American Baptist churches in Milwaukee, and only three pastors have masters of divinity degrees, two others have masters of theology, and two others have earned doctorates. Could the problems with the church's witness for Christ in Milwaukee be directly related to this lack of formal theological training? I have used this lack of training as the starting point for my other focus of ministry in this city. I have attempted to develop a strong component to train pastors and preachers here in Milwaukee through a combination of seminars, workshops, and sermons.

This context for this project is a pastoral group known as the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference. This pastoral group was formed in September of 1983, and its constitution was duly adopted on February 20, 1984. The constitution defines the objectives of the context:

> The purpose of this conference is to give visible form to that faith and fellowship to which God has called his people. We shall seek through corporate efforts to: 1. Support Christian fellowship through proclamation of the gospel by word and deed. 2. Provide Christian education through nurture, faith, and the principles of Jesus Christ. 3. Encourage human freedom through ministering to the needs of all people. [3]

Membership was offered to all Baptist pastors regardless to their race or sex, which made this organization one of the most enlightened in a city known for its racial divisiveness.

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[3] Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference, Inc. Article II.

This conference is comprised of twenty-nine church pastors and they meet from September to June during the year. The governance for the conference is vested in the membership, and contrary to the Baptist in its name, there is no ecclesiastical oversight. The officers of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference are elected and they serve a two year term. The conference officers are; President, Vice President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and Devotional Leader. The conference reflects black church life with most of the power vested in the office of president.

The conference offers numerous fellowship opportunities for pastors including a city-wide revival and Martin Luther King celebration, along with various other activities to promote the wellbeing of the members. The conference also offers a widows benefit for the wives of deceased pastors, as well as social events in which they are invited to participate in.

This organization during my administration has attempted to increase its social and political activities and advocate for the people in our neighborhoods who are suffering. The agenda for the conference reflects my interest in Christian social activism and my understanding of the biblical mandate for social justice. The members of the conference have affirmed my leadership and generally are supportive of the agenda.

The pastors who are involved in the conference represent a good cross section of the churches in our community. There are small churches, medium sized churches, and large churches participating in the conference. Most of the churches have been an integral part of this city since African Americans first migrated from the rural south to the industrial north. The oldest participating church is one hundred and twenty-five years old and the newest church is three years old. These churches serve as the people's voice in black church life in Milwaukee.

The Synergy

Why has God placed Rolen Lewis Womack Jr. in this context and in this community? Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is totally different from his hometown of Houston, Texas. The people are very different, they are from the deep southern states of Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, and Tennessee. Most of the people with whom he grew up around Houston are from Louisiana and other parts of Texas. Texas is considered to be a part of the southwest.

The cultures are also very different. Houston is a church town, where it is common for individual ministries to serve thousands of people. There are some very large church buildings, and many people appear to be committed members of the local church. The local church often becomes the hub of their social activities. Milwaukee is primarily a tavern town, because of its German heritage and its many breweries. When some people come to Milwaukee from the south their social life revolves around the taverns. There are certain taverns which are generally full of people they know from their hometowns.

Because of the rural southern influence, Progressive has some members who attend church only on the first and third Sunday or the second and fourth Sunday. Since many of these members are from down south, attendance suffers during the summer when the weather is beautiful, and family reunions and vacations lure them back to their home states. I have spoken with many people who claim membership in their hometown church after living twenty-five years in Milwaukee. People don't always put deep roots down in Milwaukee, some are only working here while planning a comfortable retirement in the south.

During conversations with various church leaders in this community, it has been my observation that life in the city of Milwaukee is stressful and hard on pastoral leaders. The city is hyper-segregated, the weather is cold and forbidding, and there are documented cases of institutional racism. The joke among some pastors, who are still

trying to leave after twenty years as pastors here, is that God has placed them here as punishment for their sins.

Why did God place me here, with no family within twelve-hundred miles, other than his wife and his daughter. Why did God take a person so close to his parents and siblings to a place so far away? Did God do it because He saw an opportunity to make him stronger, to help him grow, and to develop the margins of his personal character?

The community of Milwaukee has been good to me; the slower pace has given me time to reexamine the focus of my ministry. It has provided the latitude needed for me to synthesize my ability to lead on both a parochial and public level. Meaningful participation in activities which were not possible in the former context of Houston, Texas, are now possible and strongly encouraged.

Why did God place Rolen Womack at the Progressive Church? This pastor believes the relevant question is why did God place Progressive inside of him? When the church was started, he had only preached twelve sermons in his entire life. There was never a desire to plant a church. He considered himself to be the type of person who would take a work in progress and help it to grow into a mighty place of worship.

What would make a seemingly intelligent, reasonable, and prudent person start a church with seven people and no experience? It had to be the power of God. God uses some unlikely instruments to complete His work of kingdom building here on earth. The pastor has heard all his life that God worked in mysterious ways, and him planting a church with no experience was mysterious.

My testimony is found in my belief that God and others who are eminently acquainted with the Lord, see things in people they don't know exist. So I stopped complaining about Milwaukee years ago, using for strength the scriptural text where God spoke to the Apostle Paul when he wanted to go Bithynia, which was the home of the rich and the famous, in Acts 16:7. The Spirit of God told Paul to go to Troas, which was not famous for anything, and Paul was keenly disappointed. Since I have been in Milwaukee I have been disappointed, but I have learned how to deal with my disappointments because I understand that sometimes my disappointments could very well be God's appointments.

An Anonymous writer said, "I am thankful for the adversities which have crossed my path and taught me tolerance, perseverance, self-control and other virtues I might never have known."[4] This product of a middle class family has been called to do ministry in an environment unlike the one he received his nurturing in. There is often struggle when looking for the commonality which connects this congregation with Rolen Womack the pastor-teacher. One of the questions he wrestles with is whether or not color and Christ is enough of a contract to ensure a positive and powerful working relationship in this church.

There are also some lingering questions in moments of reflection, as to whether the Black folk expression about struggles strengthening us is really true. This idea of pastors ministering out of their pain is acceptable, but what do they do when their pain is immutable and interminable? Who do they call on after witnessing addiction, abuse, corporate welfare, disinvestment in their community, disenfranchisement, and other disincentives to marriage and work?

Galatians 6:9 says, "So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up." (NRSV) The church community has changed in Milwaukee along with the rest of America. The community the pastor of Progressive faces each Sunday is a repository of many problems, in spite of its many brilliant advancements on technological, economic, and social levels. On a technological level there are an increasing number of people in this congregation and community who are the users and owners of computers. They are now talking to each other by E mail, all of the record keeping is done by computer, and the church mailing list is computer generated. The budget analysis is done on spreadsheets, and visitors are kept track of on the computer.

But all of the members at Progressive don't own a computer. All of the members of this church are not computer literate. Technology will be one of the hot social issues in the coming millennium. Those who don't have technology will be segregated from the mainstream, and segregation has always been an economic issue. As a component of its

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[4] Iyanla Vanzant, Acts of Faith: Daily Meditations for People of Color (New York: Fireside Books, 1993), June 8.

social justice ministry, Progressive is attempting to make a computer available for every member of the church by establishing a computer club and buying service. The computer club will handle the information and training aspects of this endeavor and the buying service would help to purchase computers at deep discounts for members of Progressive. This technology is another way the church can reach people in the community at large for Jesus Christ.

There are many economic concerns in this church and many more in the community at large. There is the problem of chronic unemployment and underemployment. Family supporting job development in the city is down, whereas job development in the suburbs is up. There is no public transportation from the job poor city to the job rich suburbs. The church is looking for ways to connect the people to the jobs.

At the Progressive Church there are many success stories, but the question is how one can translate these success stories into a tangible asset for those who are jobless? This church has established a job bulletin board in our monthly newsletter, and a training program emphasizing the skills needed for a successful job search begins in January, 1998. The church is looking for some organization to form a partnership with for job training.

The social instability in this community is at times overlooked by churches because they don't think they have the resources, the respect, the revelation, or the expertise to deal with them. The relevant question for me is; "what can he do about social upheaval in his church and community?" Progressive's model for ministry is to choose as program leaders those members of the congregation who have experienced and overcome social problems.

The cocaine addict who has been clean for seven years is the perfect leader for a drug abuse ministry. The reformed alcoholic has proven to be a great leader for an Alcoholics Anonymous chapter in this church. The grandmother who is experienced in child rearing and well spoken has been used to teach teenage mothers parenting skills. Milwaukee provides this church the opportunity to be innovative in programming and positive in the approach to ministry in this community.

Now is also the right time for the creative development of a model for urban Christian social activist ministry. God in all of His wisdom has let Wyatt Tee Walker

intersect my life. Walker and his ministry at the Canaan Baptist Church of Christ will act as one of the models for this project. This study is entitled "Embodying Praxis: Improving Social Justice Practices in the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference". This project could serve as a viable paradigm for African-American churches to address the great social justice issues which they face in their communities. This project is a challenge for all of those social justice proclaimers to become social justice practitioners.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE FOR THE MODEL OF MINISTRY

Social Justice has traditionally been called the soft underbelly of the African-American church. This persists because of a lack of understanding and self identification among those who lead and comprise the community of the underclass. There is a consistent pattern of African-Americans struggling with the village concept of their ancestral home of Africa and the individualism found in their Diaspora of America. Wyatt Tee Walker eloquently writes in 1979:

> Slavery and its successor, segregation, produced a psychological and emotional disorientation in Blacks that remains observable today. In their collective consciousness, the Black people have not been absolutely sure who they are. They are not thoroughly American; they are not thoroughly African. They move in an ambivalent world of being Afro-American.[1]

This problem perseveres because African-Americans let those outside of their community set the parameters for determining who they are. Michael Eric Dyson highlights this problem in his work Race Rules, when he discusses the state of Black leadership. Dyson posits that relationships are fragmented between the various classes of African-Americans. The so-called middle class Blacks are pitted against the ghetto poor Blacks. The constituencies of two of the current notable African-American leaders, Colin Powell and Louis Farrakhan, signify this division in the Black community. Dyson further

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[1] Wyatt Tee Walker, "Somebody's Calling My Name" (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1979), 177.

states that the only current leader who understands the particularity of Blackness is Jesse Jackson. Dyson says;

> Jackson understands that blackness has gathered into its own formation a wonderful variety of social and cultural elements that make it eclectic and ever evolving. He knows that blackness is universal because it is hybrid: the combination of African and American roots. [2]

Jesse Jackson is significant in this discussion of social justice because his roots are in the modern civil rights movement pioneered by Martin Luther King Jr. The other significant person when one speaks of social justice issues in Black church life, is the irrepressible Wyatt Tee Walker. Walker and Jackson share in the legacy of the African-American church's involvement in the civil rights movement. They both worked with Martin Luther King Jr, they are both Baptist preachers, and they both demonstrate the legacy of the African-American church activist. But as the church approaches the new millennium, it appears that the church has lost its rightful place as an advocate in the African- American community.

One of the critical questions for the African-American church and those who maintain its pulpit, is what must the church do to rekindle itself from the ashes of neglect, denial, disinterest, dishonesty, and disengagement on the great social issues of this nation? Where is the African-American preacher, who during times of oppression used to have a word of hope from the Lord? There are some in the American mainstream who would argue that racism is dead, that the content of one's character, not his color, is where judgment begins. But the problem with this assessment is that someone neglected to tell the people who have to live with social injustice everyday.

The times indicate a radical approach is needed to correct the prevailing social justice issues in this country. The radical idea for today is not some new social experiment which will eventually challenge only those living at the margins of society,

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[2] Michael Eric Dyson, Race Rules: Navigating the Color Line (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. 1996), 193.

but the church is simply being asked to be the church of Jesus Christ. The church needs to return to its social justice roots which were evident in the heyday of the Black churches in the south during the civil rights movement. It was during these times that the church decided to join together with Jesus Christ to fight for the liberation of His oppressed people. There was power present in those nightly prayer meeting, when our people gathered to pray that God would give them the power and love to overcome the pervasive social oppression of the day.

It is out of this context and circumstance that Martin Luther King Jr., arguably the greatest social justice advocate to come out of the Black experience, had his revelation and transformation from pastor to prophet of social justice. William D. Watley in his book Roots of Resistance describes the spiritual journey of King : "One should not forget that Martin King did not go to Montgomery, Alabama, to become a social reformer. He went to Montgomery to pastor the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. The role of nonviolent theorist and practitioner, social prophet, and spokesperson for America's oppressed was unexpected". [3] The relevant question for today's preacher is will he or she do the unexpected?

Martin Luther King's understanding that God is a God of justice had its nexus in the pandemic, hostile, and antagonistic environment of the Montgomery bus boycott. One of the footnotes that many pastoral and religious leaders fail to understand or acknowledge, is that when the Montgomery campaign was launched, it's leadership came from members of the local ministerial community. Local pastors and religious leaders controlled and directed a campaign composed of local residents, which had nationwide ramifications. If the Montgomery campaign is used as the model for bringing about solutions to social justice issues in oppressed communities, then it is entirely possible to garner national support for resolving many of the problems people face in urban cities.

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[3] William D. Watley, Roots of Resistance (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1985), 53.

But the advent of Martin Luther King has also created a problem for many local communities, because many of them believe that the only model for social justice is the King model. The model where Martin Luther King is clearly a national leader who has decided that he would bring in all of his national resources to address a local problem. The national leader King would bring a diverse group of religious and secular groups, those who were considered moderate, liberal, and radical, and where student representation was a premium. They would organize and mobilize the locals for the task, they would bring national media exposure to the problem, they would issue a call for federal help, and hopefully the weight of all of the attention and exposure would bring an equitable solution.

Martin Luther King epitomized the national leader solution for the problems of social injustice and all forms of oppression. If the national leader model is indeed the model for leadership on the great social and moral issues in this country, then African-Americans are in trouble because their national leader, their Black Moses who was trying to lead them to the promised land was murdered at Memphis, and the struggle has been floundering ever since. One only has to look at the state of African-American church leadership in this country to understand this. There is not a single leader who can unify a national collective effort for social justice on the church horizon.

Wyatt Tee Walker, the senior pastor of Canaan Baptist Church of Harlem, one who has exhibited exemplary service in various liberation struggles, including a stint as the chief of staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (1960-1964), says;

> Let it be patently clear that the Black Church was not the exclusive agent and resource of this movement. It had help. But the issue was joined as a moral struggle; it developed as a holy cause; the leadership, with rare exception, was ministerial; the rallies were services of worship and

> celebration; the offering was the ammunition; the troops were saints and saints' children; it was chiefly a Black Church operation. [4]

Wyatt Tee Walker's statement suggests some interesting dynamics of this social justice and liberation movement. There are some principles for those who are contemplating this type ministry. First, for people to follow, for people to risk their so-called social status and social standing in the majority community, there has to be visionary leadership. People wouldn't join the struggle unless the leaders are able to articulate his or her vision for them. Secondly, people who have experienced long term social injustice and inequities, have a tendency to accept the status quo, believing that oppression is the just the way it is. These individuals must be nurtured and shown that there are possibilities for them outside of their accustomed place and position.

Thirdly, people are waiting in eager anticipation for their leaders to love and lead them. Love has the ability to overcome apathy and draw others. Lastly, the young saints (people) are generally more open to challenge and change those principalities and powers. They are more open to a well articulated vision; they are not weighed down by tradition, and when they support you, they really support you. Remember, young people can always tell if your motives are sincere and real.

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the works that the author believes are related to this model of ministry. The central theme of this project are Christian social justice issues and attempts to resolve them from a pastoral perspective. Most of the books reviewed are written by preachers who have used a Christian social activist model and use their unique experiences as pastor-preachers to wrestle with oppression issues in context. These books serve as an entry for those who are interested in becoming a social activist and developing a social justice ministry for their congregation.

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[4] Wyatt Tee Walker, Afrocentrism & Christian Faith (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1993), 43.

Ministry For Social Crisis: Theology and Praxis in the Black Church Tradition written by Forrest E. Harris Sr. is one book that is fundamental to this project because it examines the African-American preachers' response to racial and social oppression. Harris' inspiration for this book is the 1983 Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale Divinity, presented by Kelly Miller Smith Sr. The lectures were published under the title Social Crisis Preaching, which was also reviewed by the author, and demonstrate how prophetic preaching is the catalyst for social change. In this book, Harris focuses on the African-American church historically, as it seeks balance between its survival and the people's liberation. He stresses the idea that the African-American church should be dedicated to the survival and liberation of its people.

Harris posits, "In the history of the black church, the moral conviction persists that God demands social justice and cares for the poor and needy".[5] The idea of social justice goes back to the inception of the African-American church. Social justice was practiced during slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow, and segregation. The African-American church as defined by Harris is anchored in its commitment to the practice of liberation. The practice is a result of the church recognizing who it is. The reader can infer from this book that one must know and understand their history before they can deal with the reality of their present.

Forrest E. Harris proposes a method for the development of a social ministry in the African-American church. He describes the model as being an action-reflection model. Harris tells us that "the action-reflection model proposed entails a liberation process that involves black Christians in local congregations in 'the hermeneutics of the kingdom' by correlation of the black Christian story with the biblical story of liberation".[6] The hermeneutics of the kingdom involves using the African-American liberation story as

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[5] Forrest E. Harris Sr., Ministry For Social Crisis: Theology and Praxis in the Black Church Tradition (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1993), 23.

[6] Ibid., 63.

the context for interpreting biblical texts. The model is participatory in nature and dialectic in practice.

Harris determines that African-American pastors can empower or delimit their local congregation's participation in liberation and social justice ministry. This is one of the problems this researcher faced in Milwaukee. The pastors talked about liberation because they understood their congregations were inextricably hurt by racism, but there was no activism as a result of the racism. Harris suggests that the preferred model for ministry should be one which challenges the external structures of social oppression. This book provides the critical expertise needed to marry theology and liberation praxis, and use them as an instrument to revitalize the African-American church.

Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family written by Cain Hope Felder, offers another paradigm for looking at Christian social activism ministries. This book is Felder's laudatory effort to provide the correctives needed regarding past scholarly attempts to disconnect the Biblical experience from ancient African people. Felder is intent on showing that there was a Black presence in the Bible, and that Africans had an associations with the Bible prior to slavery, the Reformation, and Islam. The text is divided into race, class, and the family. The race section traces the presence of Africans in the biblical narratives and creates a framework for disputing the claim that the Bible is a white man's book. Felder uses biblical and extrabiblical data to affirm his position.

The second section addresses the issue of class. The subsection discussing biblical mandates on justice and social class paints a picture of the church in action today.

> Many Bible scholars seem to be so preoccupied with what the Bible *meant* in various ancient settings that they have postponed the task of determining what the Bible text means *today*, leaving this topic to others by default. Perhaps nowhere is this as evident as in the area of determining the mandates for justice and social class.[7]

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[7] Cain Hope Felder, Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 53.

From Felder's or any responsible African-American theologian's position, there seems to be a failure of many Bible scholars to acknowledge the need for justice across the racial spectrum. The Bible is not silent on justice and righteousness and their relationship to each other. Felder reminds us,

> The Old Testament is expansive in delineating normative standards for "doing justice". The New Testament, through different theological criteria, also expresses interest that justice is the righteousness (will) of God and was normative for Christian conduct in ancient communities of faith.[8]

This normative behavior must remain the standard for the African-American church, since the church is always espousing its biblical relevance. This book contributes to this research because it adds an additional foundation to the assertion that justice is an attribute of God and Jesus. And since justice is an attribute of God and Jesus, Jesus' church becomes the forum for achieving racial and social justice. Felder's book provides the impetus for the researcher to challenge the white religious ideology which is often pervasive in the African- American community.

J. Deotis Roberts book, Black Theology in Dialogue challenges the researcher to talk about Christian social justice issues in the majority and minority communities of Milwaukee. This book is essentially about theological dialogue which stretches across culture, and attempts to build bridges within the cultural framework of the African Diaspora of America. Roberts contributes to this researcher's quest to identify social justice as a biblical mandate and instrument for wholeness by remembering the African Church's historic interest in racial and social justice. In chapter seven of this book, titled Justice in the Service of Love, Roberts acknowledges that only two individuals exemplify this theme, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mahatma Gandhi. One of the struggles of the

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[8] Ibid., 54

researcher is the pursuit of social justice with love, in the midst of all the hate in Milwaukee.

Roberts points out that in theological ethics, there is an understanding that the Old Testament doctrine of God is justice, whereas the New Testament doctrine is righteousness, which corresponds to the verb meaning to justify. Then Roberts connects justice and love with this statement ; "Martin Luther King, Jr., in his researches into ethics and theology, found Reinhold Niebuhr's realism refreshing and helpful".[9] Niebuhr argued that Christian love is pure and perfect only in Jesus Christ, and He was crucified. Roberts' concentration on love becoming an instrument for justice provides the unique understanding necessary for establishing a social justice ministry modeled after Martin Luther King Jr.

> The distinction between the idea of justice and love is simply that justice establishes the general conditions for the good life of a group and represents the demands of love for all persons in the group. Love at the same time seeks to fulfill the special needs of persons, individually and in relation to other persons. Love requires the criticism and transformation of actual justice according to the goal of ideal justice.[10]

The Sacred Art: Preaching & Theology in the African American Tradition, by Olin P. Moyd was examined for its preaching perspective. Moyd's book was useful in establishing that the church is still the center of life in the African- American community. The focus of this book is the preaching response to issues which affect the Black church. Moyd delineates the pastoral leadership tasks of the church, when he separates preaching into the context, and theology into the content, of black church life. And Moyd uses the civil rights movement's bus boycott as the paradigm.

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[9] J. Deotis Roberts, Black Theology in Dialogue (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), 80.

[10] Ibid., 81.

> African-American preachers preached into being the Montgomery bus boycott and the civil rights movement. The masses of African-American folk in Montgomery, Alabama, got the word of inspiration to participate in the Montgomery bus boycott not from the mass media, but rather through the preaching pulpits in 1955. [11]

Preachers have always been called to carry out the efforts of liberation for those who are suffering from oppression and all manners of injustice. Moyd seeks to establish that preaching is the primary mode of theology in the African- American context. The models of ministry in the context of this project are ministries fueled by the power, persona, and persistence of an individual preacher. Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, Wyatt Tee Walker, Fred Shuttlesworth, and Jesse Jackson exemplify this paradigm for ministry. These advocates for justice are of a generation which believed justice and equality could be had through social protest and boycott. They actually believed that those in power could and would be persuaded to change their position in the face of massive demonstrations and other means of social protest.

Moyd certifies that God is the God of justice when he talks about the prophet Amos. "The reason is that the theme of justice for the poor permeates the prophecy of Amos and has been at the center of African-American preaching".[12] Moyd did not offer a particular model in which to help this project, but he underscored what effective preaching can do to move masses of people. And in the context of the African-American church good preaching is the hallmark of and can ensure the success of a social justice ministry.

The researcher could not do a project on Christian Social activism without looking at King's body of work, and they are found in A Testament Of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. , which was edited by James

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[11] Olin Moyd, The Sacred Art: Preaching and Theology in the African American Tradition (Valley Forge: Judson Press), 96.

[12] Ibid., 63.

M. Washington. Washington calls King a prophet who was martyred for a beloved global community of justice, faith, and hope. King often stood alone in his belief that there was something at the core of this country that was redeemable and needed to be set free. Washington's compilation of the works of King is a living testimony to the genius of this prophet. The researcher of this project believes no one can do a project about social justice without serious discussion of Martin Luther King's dream for America. The dream which contained a multi-cultural America, an America which went to school together, lived together, and worked together, a dream of equality and equity, of freedom and racial unity for all of the people in this country.

Social justice activism must come out of preachers who are leaders in the African-American church, and Martin Luther King Jr. offers this paradigm for leaders.

> Another thing we must do in speeding up the coming of the new age is to develop intelligent, courageous and dedicated leadership. This is one of the pressing needs of the hour. In this period of transition and growing social change, there is a dire need for leaders who are calm and yet positive, leaders who avoid the extremes of "hot-headedness" and "Uncle Tomism." The urgency of the hour calls for leaders of wise judgment and sound integrity--leaders not in love with money, but in love with justice; leaders not in love with publicity, but in love with humanity; leaders who can subject their particular egos to the greatness of the cause.[13]

This quote taken from the speech "Facing the Challenge of a New Age", given in 1956, is a testament of King's genius, his vision, and his prophetic place in the context of the African-American experience. King modeled the behavior which indicated a movement was only as good as those who were leading it. He understood that leaders must set a good example and they must be willing to suffer and sacrifice for the cause.

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[13] Edited By James M. Washington, A Testament Of Hope:The Essential Writings and Speeches Of Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 143.

The book Washington edited is supposed to be used as a model for effective leadership in the researcher's community. In Milwaukee, there is a new kind of racism on the block, it is one of institutionalized bigotry, one of self-delusional denial that racial problems still exist in this country. King has a word for these communities.

A Testament of Hope chronicles all of the essential writings of Martin Luther King from the beginning of the bus boycott in 1956, to the last sermon he preached on April 3, 1968. King offers a glimpse of the civil rights movement when they knew who the enemies were. These books chronicle what Martin Luther King said and did, and they offer a platform from which to understand the situation that exists in African-American communities today. Listen to Martin Luther King's statement of thirty years ago with today's ears.

> The majority of white Americans consider themselves committed to justice for the Negro. They believe that American society is essentially hospitable to fair play and to steady growth toward a middle-class utopia embodying racial harmony. But unfortunately this is a fantasy of self-deception and comfortable vanity. Overwhelmingly America is still struggling with irresolution and contradictions.[14]

The works of Martin Luther King Jr. are beneficial because they remind people social justice change can happen in the face of overwhelming odds. These works are not really a model, but rather a testimony of what God can do with a church pastor who decides to challenge structural evil. These collected and combined works provide the foundation for the researcher's social consciousness, and they give energy to the endeavor that has been undertaken.

Michael Eric Dyson in his book Race Rules: Navigating the Color Line, helped the researcher to focus on the requirements of a leader. Dyson confronts and challenges

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[14] Martin Luther King Jr, Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community? (New York: Mentor Books, 1967), 3.

the idea that African-Americans are the only persons suffering in this country. Dyson implores preachers to look for people who are similarly situated in America, saying it is the responsibility of church leaders to "forge links with other people and groups who are oppressed. besieged, attacked, undervalued, or marginalized in our culture".[15]

Dyson's book offers balance to the researcher because it acts as a bridge from the nostalgia of the past to the reality of the present. Dyson compels leaders who read this work to come out of the closet and show people they have the power to make effective change in a world reeling from the results of racism. Dyson's analysis of the state of African-American leadership is a classic.

Black Man's Religion: Can Christianity Be Afrocentric?, written by Glenn Usry and Craig S. Keener, is the ultimate book for people who are researching African-American projects. The end notes alone are enough to provide research for many of the projects in the Black studies department. This book is intended to remind African-American Christians of their biblical place in the history of religion.

The writers of this book present a strong case for the idea of oppressed people sharing many commonalities. They argue that racism was created to provide an ideological justification to oppress people on the basis of skin color.

> To fail to recognize that the issue behind racism is oppression is to buy into the very lie by which the oppressors have sought to define the situation of the oppressed. This broader approach of identifying with the oppressed in general also provides a practical basis for cooperation to achieve justice, helping us combat racism in a society impatient with racially specific claims.[16]

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[15] Michael Eric Dyson, Race Rules: Navigating The Color Line (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1996), 190.

[16] Glen Usry & Craig S. Keener, Black Man's Religion: Can Christianity Be Afrocentric? (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 83.

Usry and Keener's analysis of the current mood of American society is helpful for this researcher because it identifies a new element in the dialogue for justice in the African-American community. When programming for social justice one must remember that the oppressors will say they are tired of African-Americans calling every problem a racial problem. Usry and Keener also believe in a balance between self- reliance and help from those who control the power structures in the land.

Usry and Keener present a forgotten paradigm for racial justice when they discuss a shared commitment to justice. All persons involved in social justice have to wrestle over the idea of a shared commitment to social justice and the idea of justice through reconciliation. Justice through reconciliation posits that all people should embrace the common cause of battling oppression.

> Francis Grimke, a prominent Black preacher in Washington, D.C., warned that self-effacement would never work. There would be no peace in the land until the Black community received justice, for Blacks would not be satisfied with being treated as less than human beings.[17]

Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes, by Robert McAfee Brown was examined to see if Latin American theology could contribute to the dialogue of this research. Brown tries to force America to look at itself through the eyes of a third world Christian. The title Unexpected News, suggests that the Bible contains some unexpected news for religious people. Brown reminds the readers that religious people like the scribes, Pharisees, and church people are generally put down, and worship comes under attack in the book of Amos. Brown titillates the reader where he describes pagans as doing the will of God in the book of Isaiah, great spiritual leaders getting angry with God in Jeremiah, and God communicating His clearest message through the obscure life of a criminal, namely Jesus Christ.

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[17] Ibid., 111.

Brown provides theological undergirding for the researcher to look at God in new and exciting ways. Brown forces the researcher to know God on a new level. Brown argues that knowing God is tantamount to doing justice in one's context. Brown posits "to know God is to do justice and righteousness, to vindicate the poor and the needy".[18] Brown seeks to point out that those who really know God, not necessarily those in charge of the religious transaction, but those who really know God will work for justice.

A Black Theology Of Liberation, written by James H. Cone is the official handbook for those who are engaged in the African-American struggle for justice in America. Cone stresses the idea that the function of theology is to analyze the meaning of liberation for the oppressed, so that African-American people can know their struggle for political, social, and economic justice is consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Cone does not let African-American Christians forget that they are Black, as some religious leaders would have them do.

Cone simply posits that since African-Americans are Black and oppressed, then their Christian theology must become a Black theology. Cone helps the researcher to understand that "Black theology must show that the black God has nothing to do with the God worshiped in white churches whose primary purpose is to sanctify the racism of whites and to daub the wounds of blacks".[19] Cone adds credence to this researcher's position that African-Americans are capable of determining and defining their own position and creating their own religious talk. Cone puts into the hand of this researcher another tool to fight the Black fundamental orthodoxy which prevails in this context as it relates to social justice issues.

The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith, written by Samuel Dewitt Proctor was used to give the researcher balance. This book is

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[18] Robert McAfee Brown, Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 67.

[19] James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation: Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 62.

not an indictment of society about the lack of social justice, but it is about the faith of a family who survive and prosper in spite of social injustice. Proctor in all of his genuine genius creates a paradigm which recognizes that hate is intolerable, and can stymie the process of social justice. Proctor forces the researcher to understand that faith is the one function that can not be overlooked in the battle for social and racial justice.

Proctor also cleverly forces the researcher to remember to look at two apparently dichotomous sides of an issue while seeking righteousness and justice. Proctor also provides a warning for those who are involved in research. He says "although we must be honest in stating the facts of the crisis, if we get lost in the 'paralysis of analysis' we cannot move toward change".[20] Proctor stresses the ability and capacity of African-Americans to change their situation.

The book, From Holy Power To Holy Profits written by Walter Malone Jr., was the subject of a presentation by Malone in Milwaukee. Malone confronts the problem of economic injustice in this book and offers a paradigm for change within the context of the African-American church. Malone and the researcher are in agreement over the direction of the church in context. Malone posits that the church must have an understanding of the kingdom of God being realized right now. And he cleverly divides the church in the African-American community into two groups, the non-liberation and the liberation church. This researcher is interested in the liberation church, which Malone describes as espousing the theology that "God desires our liberation from anyone, or anything, that seeks to oppress us in the world."[21]

Malone uses the idea of revolution as a metaphor for social and economic justice in context. Malone states that "when the idea of revolution is understood as a vehicle for social change to build and empower the lives of people who have been socially,

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[20] Samuel Dewitt Proctor, The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir Of African-American Faith (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 177.

[21] Walter Malone Jr., From Holy Power To Holy Profits (Chicago: African American Images, 1994), 8.

politically, and economically deprived, it then conveys a positive and purposeful meaning".[22] Malone reminds the researcher that there can also be unity in the diverse views which are present in the African-American community. But there must be an effort to seek the common ground found in the various leaders in the African-American community, especially in the context of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference.

Pastoral Theology: A Black-Church Perspective, written by James H. Harris gave a pastoral critic of the model. This book is crucial to the researcher because of its focus on pastoral theology in the African-American church. Harris argues that Black theology is important to the church and that it is really liberation theology because it is grounded in praxis. Harris grapples with the misunderstanding of some pastors as it relates to their call in the Black church context. Harris brings forth a handbook to help pastoral leaders redefine their response to the liberation issues in the worshiping community.

Harris is particularly effective for the researcher's context when he addresses liberation theology and tells how to take it from theory to practice. Harris cautions leaders who practice liberation theology to be mindful of their treatment of women. Harris also says "every black churchgoer, especially the economically secure, should understand that tithing or some larger form of proportionate giving significantly affects the liberation of blacks".[23] Harris believes economic empowerment is one of the answers to liberation and social justice issues.

Afrocentrism & Christian Faith written by Wyatt Tee Walker helps the researcher to persevere. Walker reminds the readers of the internal strength of the African-American religious experience which served to develop the Black church as it is known today. Walker is an icon in black church life and he serves as a living link to the civil rights movement of the sixties. Walker's book proposes that the most significant figure in

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[22] Ibid., 47.

[23] James H. Harris, Pastoral Theology: A Black-Church Perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 66.

African-American life comes out of the Black church, and it is the African-American folk preacher. Walker argues that the instruments for social change in this context are preachers, and they have been instrumental in providing the visions and the dynamic for social justice.

Walker also posits that "the preaching and theology of a Black preacher, with all the inherent imperfections, gave cohesion and commonality to an oppressed people".[24] Walker and the researcher believe the role of the preacher is to bring hope in the midst of hopeless situations. Walker believes that the African-American preacher is existentialist when it comes to matters of function and faith. The researcher has been inspired by the well documented life and ministry of Wyatt Tee Walker.

The researcher believes these works are pertinent to the development of this project and they served as an inspiration while this work was taking place. The researcher also believes the African-American church and its pastor-preachers must resume their rightful places on the front lines and firing lines of the battle for social and economic justice in this nation. The stakes are extremely high, the lives of Black people are dependent upon these actions, and social change must come to the top of their agendas. Martin Luther King said, "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of *now*. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is a such a thing as being too late."[25]

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[24] Wyatt Tee Walker, Afrocentrism and Christian Faith (New York: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1993), 21.

[25] Martin Luther King Jr. , Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community (New York: Mentor Books, 1967), 78.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL JUSTICE

> There was a time in human history when the human individual was considered to be helpless with regard to changing or even affecting the social order apart from conformity to perceived sacred tradition. Human beings were conceived as subject to the whims of a sometimes capricious but sovereign cosmological order. In the history of humankind, it is relatively recent that the human individual has been seen as a shaper of society and a maker of human history.[1]

The Statement of Focus

Jesus walks into his "home church" in the city of Galilee and puts forth his plan and purpose for ministry with these words:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. [2]

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[1] Kelly Miller Smith, Social Crisis Preaching (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 7.

[2] Luke 4:18-19

This statement is the theological "raison d'etre" for Christian social activism in the African-American church. And if the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference take these verses found in Luke 4:18 and 19 seriously as a mission statement for the church of Jesus Christ, then it must put all of its strength and resources into working for social justice in Milwaukee.

This text biblically makes a missiological declaration to release those who are suffering under oppressive conditions. The missiological declaration is in the form of a public announcement. This announcement is an acknowledgement of a public ministry for the existential situation of an oppressed community. Jesus Christ states that He is coming to change things, and his power comes from His anointing by the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus comes seeking those who have been victimized, to liberate them from the forces of evil will who have perpetuated their oppressive social condition.

The researcher will attempt to posit a paradigm which shows that without social justice there can never be peace and prosperity in any community, city, or state. Contextually speaking, the relevant question is will the African-American church join together with Jesus in the fight for justice and liberation? Theologically speaking, the African-American Christian church is the community of the oppressed, and the God we serve is a God of justice.

God is indeed concerned about justice. And since the scripture text also spoke to the fact that God is concerned about injustice, then all of His activities in this world must be centered around extricating and emancipating people from injustice. This document will closely examine the history of Israel, and then it will look at the New Testament image of Jesus Christ. When this happens one can see God manifesting Himself to those who are at the margins of society. Jesus' primary point of ministry was not to those with privilege and power, but to those who were suffering from and oppressed by the Roman system of injustice.

The principalities and powers of injustice are still at work in American society, and they are visible every day and every where people gather. They are especially pervasive and powerful in the African-American Christian community, where oppression

is a direct result of color. The community and the church must come together around the Bible, which gives another answer and vision which reflects the idea that justice is what God ordered for people. This project is the researcher's attempt to demonstrate what the Lord has in mind for His people.

There can't be a discussion of social justice theological issues in the church without establishing those who are oppressed, and their need for liberation from the principalities and powers of structural evil. James Cone believes that all Christian theology should be a theology of liberation. Cone states "It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to be the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ."[3] There is no separation between Christian theology and social justice regardless of what the conservative Christian theologians say.

Christian theology is the human interpretation of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ came to those who have been denigrated, devalued, and denounced. How can Christian theology be liberation theology if it does not come out of the community of those who are living at the margins of society? It seems that African-American church leaders have spent too much time letting others delineate and define their theology. The litmus test for Christian theology is not in slick multimedia presentations, but is found in the churches where the pastor-preacher understands his or her priestly duties and prophetic obligation.

Theological Foundations

African-American theology has the responsibility to be responsive to the contemporary experiences of those who reside in this community context. Those who

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[3] James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation: Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986, 1990), 3.

proclaim the gospel must convey the great theological truth that what God has accomplished during past times, God can also accomplish in the present reality of whatever circumstances people find themselves. It's inherently in the African-American's history that God has the last Word, and He is the God of justice. The prophet Amos provides one of the Old Testament Biblical backgrounds for which God is identified and appropriated as the God of justice.

African-American preaching has always been permeated by the prophecy of Amos, and it can still be seen and heard in the preaching of many modern day prophets. When the African-American prophet tells the Amos story, the congregation pictures the preacher as Amos and themselves as the poor suffering community. They hear the lessons of Amos, and they realize the same kind of oppressors are living today. They see them every day on their jobs, in their neighborhoods, in the mall, at the local financial institution, and even at churches in their cities.

The oppressors featured in the Book of Amos share many similarities with those who oppress today. Their religious rituals are the centerpiece of their faith, but they don't translate into righteousness. Amos speaks to these oppressors when he says, "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals".[4]

Identification with Amos is easy for African-Americans, for those who have heard Amos' word know that his socioeconomic position is not dissimilar to theirs. They have read and heard the story about this peasant from Tekoa. They know he is a shepherd, herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees. They know that he is a spokesperson for the poor during a time of great material wealth and prosperity, just like today. This is a contemporary story with all of the elements normally found in the current social crises which exist in this country. The Bible has this ability to transcend time.

Amos says things have gotten so bad that "they pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor."[5] This text reminds the researcher of conservative Christians and their effective efforts to evangelize those who only believe in the practice

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[4] Amos 2:6
[5] Amos 2:7

of religious formalities. They come on as if they are oppressed, but in actuality they are the oppressors of the poor and those who are powerless in our society. And they are not the only group who preach and practice religious formalities in the religious mainstream.

Leonard Fein in his discussion of the Jewish approach to social justice, states that the Jews and classical Judaism understand that there is God, and that there is God's law. This means that when it comes to economic or social justice, there is no need for ethical teaching. Ethics are subsumed under Jewish law, and so when the prophets were calling the people to justice, they were really calling them to obedience. The Jewish religion has no preferential option for the poor, but they have these commandments which govern down to the most minute detail, their response to the poor.

The problem with their approach to this situation is their inability to follow the commandments. Fein affixes the blame for them disregarding God on the advent of Enlightenment. He says Enlightenment "radically transformed our relationship to the Giver of those laws, to the Commander of those commandments. The Ten Commandments have been reduced to the ten suggestions."[6] Fein goes on to suggest that the pulpit rabbi has lost his or her prophetic power in the eyes of the worshiping community. The pulpit rabbi is viewed as a "figure of religious authority only so long as religion is understood as a compartment of life rather than as a way of life." [7] Religious formalities affect all of the mainstream religious groups, and this is reflected in the fact that ritualism and pietism are not necessarily synonymous.

The theological foundation of the researcher's story is found in his understanding that those outside of his tradition may never fully understand his position and its praxis. Those outside the African-American tradition may never fully understand why the researcher must continually dialogue with those who have experienced the struggle, like Wyatt Tee Walker, Samuel Dewitt Proctor, Martin Luther King Jr., Gardner C. Taylor, and Otis Moss. These preachers, prophets, and theologians, who are the contemporary

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[6] Leonard Fein, "Mending the World: A Jewish Approach to Social Justice" . Commonwealth, 14 January 1994, 21 (4)

[7] Ibid., 21 (4)

Amoses, have helped African-American preachers to better comprehend the biblical mandate of Amos.

When Amos tells his listeners, "For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins; afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate,"[8] he is reminding them that there will be a day of judgment for the oppressors, and also a day of redemption for the oppressed. Amos addresses the totality of the African-American's personal internal and external struggle, over the Old Testament idea of a divine mandate for social justice by saying: "Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream."[9]

When one surveys the African-American community, one can't help but to believe that eradicating the systemic and structural oppression in the cities, must become the number-one priority of all African-American church leaders. If those preachers who are charged with doing the work of God, don't work in concert on this endeavor, social justice could become an illusion to those they minister to in their religious realms.

The New Testament Biblical mandate is found when one turns to Jesus and looks at Luke 4:18-19 where His mission statement is recorded. One of the realities of the African-American church is that God the Father is central in the theology and teaching, but Jesus Christ embodies the mission of God to the people of God. Jesus is important in this text because His witness addresses the real life situation of those who comprise the worshiping community, in the Milwaukee context.

Jesus offers good news to those who are suffering because they have their backs to the proverbial wall. The researcher defines a wall as anything which prohibits the free social and economic movement of Black people. Walls to constrain opportunity are often erected all over the Milwaukee area, especially between the suburbs and the city. This disengagement between the communities is historical. But Jesus comes along and provides an existential moment, suggesting to hearers that they will be free from sin and second-class citizenship and whatever else that has fostered their historical disillusionment. When Robert McAfee Brown talks about this text, he posits the theory

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[8] Amos 5:12
[9] Amos 5:24

that the Bible spends a great deal of time speaking of the poor. But, "it all seems askew, for while the poor do get a lot of attention in the Bible, the nonpoor get a lot of attention in the church and usually end up running things".[10] This becomes a problem for the church because the nonpoor become the official interpreters of the Scriptures. And they have taken most of the bite out of God's Word when it comes to dealing with the poor. This is typically evident in the mainstream churches and the so-called African-American "Word" churches, where their concentration is on the internal life, instead of the total condition of humanity.

The internal life idea happens when an individual attempts to make his or her personal life better, without regard to the external conditions which exist all around them. Those who have an involved external life are concerned with the economic order, the equitable sharing of the world's rewards and resources, and the need to care for those in society less fortunate than themselves. A critical reading of Luke 4:18-19 reminds people that this episode in the synagogue in Nazareth is the paradigm story for the rest of the New Testament Scriptures.

Exegetically speaking, Jesus has just returned to His "home church" after being away for some time. The priests in charge of the worship services ask Him to read the Scripture. He chooses to read a familiar text to them, one that everyone knew by heart, a text full of hope and promise. When Jesus has finished, he gives the scroll back to the attendant and comments that the words they have heard are coming true right now. The worship services are full when Jesus speaks about a reversal of fortune, about a reordering of the social structures, a change in the normative position of those who are living under dismal conditions where disenfranchisement and disappointment is the natural order of things.

Jesus tells the structural powers of the synagogue that change is coming. The poor, those people whose lives have been one succession after another of bad news, will

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[10] Robert McAfee Brown, Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 89.

finally get some good news. The captives, those people whose lives have consisted of them being bound, will be released. The blind, those people who have been denied sight, will now see again. The oppressed, those people whose lives have been nothing but incarceration and enslavement, will be liberated. Jesus stood in the worships services and told the congregation that everything would be reversed. Jesus in this text announces to all who would listen, that his ministry is to rehabilitate the marginal who have lost their land and social power.

The text ends with these words "the acceptable year of the Lord." This powerful question confronts all who practice ministry; what is "the acceptable year of the Lord?" Jesus is talking about the year of Jubilee. Leviticus 25:1-24 provides the answer, and it will help ministers understand why chaos and confusion breaks out in the worship service, and why the religious authorities in Jerusalem and those with positions of power went after Jesus. Just like the people are supposed to rest on the seventh day, the Sabbath, the earth is also supposed to rest every seven years. "But in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard."[11]

God had already made provisions for His people, since He knew that this could threaten the economic stability and survival of farmers and vintners. So God promises that the sixth year crops would be sufficient to carry the people during the seventh year. Now after this cycle has been repeated seven times, the fiftieth year comes up, and it is called the year of Jubilee. During the year of Jubilee the soil will not be tilled. During Jubilee all debts are canceled, everyone has a chance to start all over again, without debt. During Jubilee, the slaves are set free. During Jubilee, all money and all capital is to be redistributed.

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[11] Leviticus 25:4

So when Jesus talks about the "acceptable year of the Lord", He is proclaiming a radical social change. The Jubilee emphasis means that Jesus' mission is "a visible socio-political-economic restructuring of relations among the people of God."[12] The message is abundantly clear: the good news is for the poor and oppressed. It is liberation from economic, political, social, and physical bondage. Debts will be canceled, slavery annulled, and vast land holdings will be broken up. Everything will be restructured.

When Cain Hope Felder discusses Luke 4:18-19, he posits that Jesus Christ comes to bring compensatory justice to the oppressed.

> Compensatory justice is the moral process of correcting past or present injury, dispossession, exploitation, and the violation of rights. It makes restitution, offers reparations, seeks to restore persons to wholeness, and grants them rightful status in the community.[13]

The compensatory justice theme is one of the major means of Jesus' ministry as He fulfills the Law and the prophets, which begins the kingdom of God. The aim and the focus of Jesus' ministry is to validate those who are a part of a marginalized and disenfranchised socioeconomic group. Luke 4:18-19 categorizes this group as the poor, the sick, the captives, and the oppressed. Jesus announces He will use any means possible to bring forth the Kingdom of God. He uses healings, acts of mercy, forgiveness, direct confrontation and religious disobedience, often in conflict with mainstream temple theology and its leadership.

All that Jesus does points to His compensatory witness for the poor. This same compensatory witness enables Jesus to instruct His disciples to go and tell John the Baptist while he is in prison, that the Kingdom of God has arrived. "Go and tell John the

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[12] John Howard Yoder, The Politics if Jesus (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 39.

[13] Cain Hope Felder, Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class and Family (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books., 1989), 73.

things you have seen and heard; that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them."[14] Jesus understood how the system worked. He understood that the social status of the poor and needy was often abused and ignored by the religious rulers. This happened in spite of the guarantees of the Old Testament's social legislation. The religious leaders and the religious elite followed the social norms of society instead of the laws of the Bible.

There is another more radical way we can look at Luke 4:18-19. It is known that Jesus is offering preferential treatment for the poor, but He also challenges people to be a part of the problem or a part of the solution. The challenge for humanity is whether or not they will disavow whoever or whatever perpetuates poverty. If they participate in the structures that oppress people, they must change them or eliminate them. Those who oppress must realize their oppression dehumanizes them as well as those whom they oppress.

Jesus is very clear in Luke 4:18-19 on this issue. He gives the church this revelation while He is in the synagogue. Jesus tells the worshipers that the poor are the recipients of the good news, which excludes most of the listeners in the worship service. He also states that the outcasts, the nonreligious types, and people from other nations and other cultures will get preferential treatment, which excludes them. These two texts prove this point: "And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men'."[15] And "Then they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth."[16]

Robert McAfee Brown transliterates Luke 4:18-19 to read:

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[14] Luke 7:22
[15] Matthew 22:16
[16] Luke 20:21

> The land is not to be exploited any more, slaves are to be freed, debts are to be canceled, capital unjustly gained is to redistributed. Any political, social, or religious structures that perpetuate exploitation must be changed to create a society committed to the reversal of the plight of the poor (meaning the materially poor), the captives (meaning the dregs), the blind (meaning the blind), and the oppressed (meaning the victims). The provisions of the Jubilee are not spiritual consolation prizes for those who fail to make it here and now, they are specific descriptions of what the here and now is already in the process of becoming.[17]

The purpose of this Biblical mandate is to change the way this text is read and posit a new perspective, where one's self-interest is directly related to the welfare of the socioeconomically and spiritually oppressed others.

Richard Lischer, Professor of Homiletics at the Divinity School of Duke University writes this about a modern day prophet and model for social justice ministry: "like no preacher in the twentieth century and no politician since Lincoln, Martin Luther King has transposed the Judeo-Christian themes of love, suffering, deliverance, and justice from the sacred shelter of the pulpit into the area of public policy."[18] The researcher believes Martin Luther King Jr. presents the perfect paradigm for the ministerial task that all African-American pastors face.

So the focus of this project is "Embodying Praxis: Improving Social Justice Practices in the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference". The greatest dilemma the pastor-teacher faces today is whether or not his or her approach to ministry will have a priestly focus or a prophetic focus. The researcher is convinced that Biblical preaching is the undergirding of any social justice ministry. And if preaching is the foundation of a

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[17] Robert McAfee Brown, UNEXPECTED NEWS Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 102-103.

[18] Richard Lischer, The Preacher King: Martin Luther King and the Word That Moved America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 27.

Christian social activist ministry, then the voice which reaches out of the pulpit must be prophetic.

The pastor-preacher has an awesome responsibility to bring forth a paradigm for ministry which reflects prophetic integrity and mission. He or she must become more like Amos who spoke from a position of responsibility within the congregation called Israel. Israel was defined by Amos as the whole people of the covenant, and he was obligated by his call from God to prophesy to them. Amos must be regarded as a model for prophetic voices within the religious community. The task of the spiritual leaders of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference should be to make sure that their congregation and others understand that they are not some misanthropic outsiders, condemning an institution they neither care about nor understand.

The Wisconsin Baptist Pastors need to show that they are concerned insiders who are calling the community to responsible behavior and holy action. Their holy acts are supposed to show those they encounter that God's justice is universal, and all must be held accountable for their treatment of each other. Their witness must remind those they meet and minister to, that the people of God are subject to the same demands and same punishment as others. And that their religion does not grant them special status in God's eyes.

The God who will be known to most African-Americans in the coming century will be the God they encounter at the preaching moment. Pastoral leaders must remember to address people where they are, and the preaching must be situational with eternal implications. The preaching opportunity always occurs at the intersection where the human situation of people and the Word of God meet in time and place. If social justice is to remain authentic it has to come forth in the preaching of the Biblical mandates. The prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah preached their way through. The Son of the Living God, Jesus, preached His way through, because He understood who the real

enemy was. The times changed, but the corporate sins of an unjust and oppressive social system still remain.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This design focuses on the project the researcher completed as a fulfillment of the Doctor of Ministry program at the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. This project was implemented at the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference, and so the context is the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which is according to the 1990 census, one of the most racially divided and polarized cities in the nation. Milwaukee epitomizes the physical and social makeup of many Midwestern cities, with over ninety percent of the African-American population concentrated in the central city. Milwaukee according to this statistical data is hyper-segregated, and therefore it suffers from a pathology of social injustice.

There are two approaches to research which are accepted by the academy, quantitative and qualitative. Both methods state a purpose, pose a problem or question, define a research population, develop a time frame, collect and analyze data, and present outcomes. Quantitative research generally uses an instrument, involves a large number of people, and is analyzed by reducing the data to numbers. This method is normally supported by a scientific paradigm, which posits that the world is made up of observable, definable, and measurable facts.

Qualitative research is different because "its methods are generally supported by an interpretivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed,

complex, and everchanging".[1] In quantitative research the researcher's role is to observe and measure, whereas in qualitative research the researcher has to deal with many socially constructed realities or "qualities" that are complex, and interpret how participants in a social setting construct the world around them. The researcher used the qualitative method for research on this project.

The qualitative inquiry was used because the method is often evolutionary. "Hard-to-answer, context-bound questions emerge along with unexpected patterns and new understanding through the evolutionary nature of qualitative".[2] The criteria for qualitative research includes a problem statement, a design, some interview questions, and interpretations, which are generally developing and changing along the way. Qualitative research is never packaged in neat little research steps, and this project with the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference is indicative of the ambiguity that is sometimes prevalent in this type of research.

From a theologian's perspective, qualitative research is ideal because it involves contextualization and interpretation, and it allows the researcher to be used as an instrument in the project. The responsibility involved in this research rests on the researcher's ability to explore his own contextual milieu, and his willingness to interpret how the process shapes his inner being.

The research for this project allowed the researcher to investigate a group he has been a part of for seven years, with a critical analysis. The process also forced the researcher to reexamine his ministry as a part of the reflective process, with the understanding that the qualitative researcher's role is to translate social experiences and construct narratives documenting them for socio-political-economic change.

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[1] Corrine Glesne & Alan Peshkin, Becoming Qualitative Researchers (White Plains, New York : Longman, 1992), 6.

[2] Ibid., 6

This project was the researcher's attempt to introduce to these African-American pastors the dynamics of Christian nonviolent protest and boycott on the vital social issues of African-American life. The Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference were the context associates. They were used as the field test body to determine whether the dynamics of nonviolent social activism affected their individual ministries.

The researcher wanted to establish that Christian social activists like Martin Luther King Jr., Wyatt Tee Walker, and Jesse Jackson's social justice behavior was normative, and it flowed out of a biblical mandate, which constitutes a model for Christian pastoral leadership. The pivotal question for this context was; did they believe that there was a biblical mandate for social justice? The secondary question was would their various churches work to change systems, would they challenge the downtown power brokers on justice issues, to ensure adherence to Jesus' mandate found in Luke 4:18-19.

This project was designed to collect data in the Milwaukee pastoral community, regarding their perceptions about the need for social justice in their ministries and to gather information about the social justice inequalities the responders have encountered as church leaders. An examination of the problems their parishioners faced was also needed to determine if the ministry of the churches were a reflection of the problems in context.

When the context was surveyed, it appeared that those who are involved in church leadership have not given social justice issues a high priority, even when the downtown power brokers in their city continue a program and policy of social and economic neglect in the affected community. So this project is designed to find out if there is a correlation between what the researcher has witnessed as it relates to what's happening in the city, and what the pastoral leaders see as God calling them to corrective action. The relevant question is can the apparent reality of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference be

refocused into an embodying praxis, which will improve social justice practices in this context.

The researcher decided to use a proactive research method. The project design had three separate components. The first component was a multi-question field test, which was called the "Milwaukee Pastors Conference Survey", and it served as the data collection instrument. This questionnaire was administered to ten pastors who became the context associates. These ten pastors represented an array of different churches in the Milwaukee community, from small to large, from trained ministry to non-trained ministry, from rural oriented to urban oriented.

There were nine basic questions, divided into three different sections. The pastor's and church's name and location were asked. What age categories were the pastors in? How many years since their call to preach? How many years of pastoral experience did they have? And how many years of formal education? They were also asked about the characteristics of their congregations. What size, what percentage is male and female? What percentage did they identify as youth? What percentage of the congregation is southern, western, Midwestern, and Northeastern? See full questionnaire in Apendix C.

They were also asked the average income of their congregation and what percentage of them struggle to make ends meet? They were also asked which of the categories best described the social status of their church, high middle, or low? They were asked what is the most common problem affecting their membership, and what community ministries did they operate? They were asked if the church is located in the inner city or the outer city.

The pastors were asked in this questionnaire what the term, "social justice", means to them and based on their interpretation of social justice, did they believe there is a Biblical mandate to support efforts for achieving it? And the last question was how did they view the church's role in assisting social justice. They were also asked to comment

on their experiences and perceptions regarding social justice as it relates to their congregational context.

The second component was a series of two seminars and two sermons by the designer of the project, and scheduled seminars and symposiums by Wyatt Tee Walker and Walter Malone. The seminars used a curriculum developed out of the many published works of Wyatt Tee Walker, Martin Luther King Jr., and others who have used social justice as a paradigm for Christian Pastoral Leadership. They were completed during our regular Monday meeting times which last for two hours.

The third component was another multi-question field test for the participants in this project. This was given to those who participated in the seminar, and it repeated the same questions asked in the initial questionnaire. The premise of the project, the seminars, and the symposiums was to foster transformative behavior in the minds and ministries of the pastors who comprised the context. The researcher found out that their minds did not need transforming, but the way they applied the biblical mandate in a concrete way in their everyday ministries needed to be transformed. This will be amplified later in this document.

The Context Associates

The ten context associates were selected from the twenty nine person membership role of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference, which is a local Milwaukee group comprised of churches in the metropolitan area. They were chosen because they represented an excellent cross-section of churches in the community. They presented small and large congregations, traditional and contemporary ministries, hard core inner city and near suburban type congregations. These pastors also expressed an interest in

helping the researcher with his education process, and offered encouragement for him while he attempted this endeavor. (See appendix A.)

The Consultants

The consultants were selected to include people with a broad field of experience and practice, including two pastors of inner city churches with different missions and mandates, and a widely noted urbanologist, researcher, and demographer from the local university. This interesting group of people presented an instructive model for the context, effective in helping guide the researcher and they were supportive of the process.

The researcher's associates, consultants, peers, and mentor were very supportive during this period of preparation and scholarship. See detailed listing in Appendixs A and B.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND SURVEY RESULTS

Field Experience

One of the great mysteries people have to contend with is the tendency to pass judgment on people, places, and events without the benefit of careful, intense and precise study. The researcher must admit that sometimes he is somewhat critical of those in the preaching ministries, but not nearly as critical of them as he is of himself. Pastors need to understand that they must minister to a world in the midst of unbelievable social pathologies, a world that longs for the inculcation of God's Word amidst the hell and havoc they are experiencing daily. But the researcher is often troubled by what appears to be the lack of discipline in the application of the imperatives of God to the prevailing social, economic, and political conditions in Milwaukee.

It was out of this concern and experience that the researcher reached the hypothesis that pastor-preachers in this context did not believe that there is a biblical mandate for social justice. Harold M. Rose, Professor of Geography and Urban Studies at the University of Wisconsin, was chosen to help develop a questionnaire or survey to determine if this hypothesis was valid. Professor Rose additionally suggested that the pastors be grouped by age, years since their initial call to preach, and years of pastoral service at their church. All of these factors could impact the questionnaire results.

The questionnaire that was developed is called the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference Survey. This is a qualitative survey, and there are nine basic questions on the

questionnaire, plus room for additional comments. The researcher wanted to know the age of the pastor to determine if age impacted the congruence between believing and acting for social justice. Though it could be theorized that long-term pastors would be more secure in their position and maybe therefore less reluctant to boycott or demonstrate for social justice causes, this is not the primary focus of the research.

Also included in the questionnaire was a question about formal education to see if pastors with formal education acted more consistently in addressing social justice issues. It is also assumed in the characteristics of the congregation in question that church membership size, gender, average age, background, income, and social status can be used to help determine the consistency of the proclamation and practice of social justice in the individual church context.

The location of the church question, when the researcher asked if the church is located in the inner city or the outer city, is testing to see if the areas with the largest social problems have pastoral leadership who are sensitive to these problems in their proclamation and practice of social justice. When the researcher asks the respondents to define social justice, he is testing to see what they believe about social justice in relation to the Christian faith. The last two questions which also revolve around social justice, are there to make the respondents contextualize the concept as it relates to that church's proclamation and practices.

The questionnaire was given to all of the members of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference, and 35% of them were returned. Those who responded to the questionnaire form an interesting and exciting sample population. They range in age from their thirties to their sixties, and all of them have at least ten years of pastoral experience, with the more senior pastors having more than thirty years of pastoral experience. Only one of them did not complete high school. The remaining respondents included one high school graduate and eight college graduates. Out of the other eight respondents, six have completed work beyond their four years of college. I found that

education did not make a considerable difference in terms of the belief and practice of social justice.

The congregation membership at these ten churches range from one with less than a hundred and fifty (150), to two with memberships which range between one thousand and fifteen hundred (1000-1500), with the mean size falling in the four hundred to six hundred ninety nine (400-699) category. The gender makeup of the sample congregations is heavily female; they range from ninety percent (90%) female to sixty percent (60%) female, with the mean ratio being sixty percent (60%) female and forty percent (40%) male, reported by six of the respondents. The questionnaire indicated that size and gender did not determine whether a church actively participated in the procurement of social justice.

The average yearly income of the membership at the churches who participated in the sample is twenty five thousand dollars ($25,000). The low is twelve thousand dollars ($12,000), and the high is thirty thousand dollars ($30,000). The approximate percentage of the congregations which struggle to make ends meet range from eighty percent (80%) to ten percent (10%), with a mean average of ten percent (10%). All but one of the churches defined the social status of the membership as middle class, and one church defined the social status of its membership as low class.

The percentage of members identified as youth range from sixty percent (60%), which incidentally is the church with the highest number of female members, to ten percent (10%). The mean average for those who are identified as youth is thirty percent (30%). The surveyed churches' membership generally comes from the south, and two of them say that ninety percent (90%) of their members were from the south. One of the respondents reported his membership as being fifty four percent (54%) from the Midwest; the mean membership connection is southern, and it is more that seventy percent (70%).

The common problems affecting the members of the surveyed churches vary. They include job and family stability, inner city violence, lack of home ownership,

unemployment, corporate downsizing, commitment, education, family and marital crises, and drugs. The most common problems mentioned by 70% of the respondents are employment or job related.

But their social justice activities are limited to providing AODA/Spirituality support, food pantries, clothing banks, after school-tutorial, hot meals, community service workers, homebound programs, holistic health ministries, prison ministries, mission ministries, jail ministries, day care, senior housing, low income housing, elementary school partnerships, business development, guest house outreach ministries, and rescue missions. The most common ministry found in 70% of the churches is a food pantry. Most of these activities are geared to make individuals feel good, they do not contribute to the transformation of social structures.

When the researcher asked the church pastors to define social justice he received a wide range of answers. One pastor said "Social justice is characterized by friendly relations or companionship, the life and welfare of human beings in a community correcting or setting right that which or who was wronged".[1] Another pastor said social justice is "People living together experiencing the quality of a fair system as it relates to one's civil rights".[2] One of the other pastors described social justice "Fairness and equality".[3] Another said it was "Involvement in programs that benefit the immediate surrounding community".[4] And another of the pastors said social justice is "The attempt to acquire what is just for all".[5]

Another of the pastors described social justice as being "Empowerment for the community through the righteousness of God in Christ lived out in the lives of people

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[1] Anonymous, context associate.
[2] Anonymous, context associate.
[3] Anonymous, context associate.
[4] Anonymous, context associate.
[5] Anonymous, context associate.

committed to God and each other".[6] One of the other pastors stated that social justice is "Economic and fair play".[7] Another pastor said social justice is "Helping those who are unable to help themselves and giving them the best chance for success".[8] The final definition given by a pastor for social justice was "I understand the term 'social justice' to denote a philosophy or policy adopted and adhered to that promotes fairness and equality for all people".[9]

Then they were all asked if there was a biblical mandate for social justice, and they all answered yes. Some of the pastors responded by giving scripture references for the biblical mandate in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Three of the pastors quoted Luke 4:18-19 to support their answer. Another pastor used the book of Judges as the Old Testament reference and Matthew 12:18 as the New Testament reference for a biblical mandate for social justice. Other pastors mentioned Matthew 25: 35-36, Exodus 22: 14-26, and Leviticus 19:9-10 to show that social justice was a biblical mandate.

The final question was how did they view the church's role in assisting social justice? Interestingly, the range of responses from the pastors varied. One of the pastors said the church "Should preach and teach the gospel of Jesus who is the righteous judge of social justice, as we minister to the community".[10] Another pastor said the church role includes "Speaking out, protesting, educating, and registering new voters".[11] One said "By being a strong advocate on issues as it relates to justice for all the people".[12] Another pastor said "The church is a vehicle of liberation, and it can be the conscience of the community speaking out against social standards and practices that oppress people, and it

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[6] Anonymous, context associate.
[7] Anonymous, context associate.
[8] Anonymous, context associate.
[9] Anonymous, context associate.
[10] Anonymous, context associate.
[11] Anonymous, context associate.
[12] Anonymous, context associate.

can also be the voice of those victimized by such policies who cries are hushed or worse yet, ignored".[13]

Another of the questionnaire respondents said "The church is the one and only vehicle for social justice in oppressed communities".[14] One of the other pastors said "The church must be the leader in the area of social justice".[15] Another pastor said the church must develop "Outreach programs, benevolence ministries, and church owned and operated businesses". [16] One pastor stated that the church's role is "Advocacy and providing child care, clothing, food pantries, and transportation for the elderly". [17] And another of the pastors said "The church's role is to be like Christ who set the example of what ministries he would take upon Himself".[18]

The researcher's hypothesis was that the pastor-preachers in his context did not believe that there was a biblical mandate for social justice. One hundred percent of the pastors who participated in this questionnaire answered yes, when asked if they believed social justice has a biblical mandate. In addition to the yes answers, they quoted various scripture texts from the Bible to validate this mandate. They indicated an knowledge of scripture in the Old Testament and the New Testament to support their belief. They were all in agreement that social justice has a biblical mandate. They believe but don't practice social justice because all of their activities focus on individuals.

After this questionnaire was completed, the researcher preached two sermons and conducted two seminars that addressed social justice issues. The sermon and seminar series intention was to provide clarity and insight to the social issues people in congregation life face each day. These working sessions were used to familiarize the

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[13] Anonymous, context associate.
[14] Anonymous, context associate.
[15] Anonymous, context associate.
[16] Anonymous, context associate.
[17] Anonymous, context associate.
[18] Anonymous, context associate.

Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference with some concepts which could be used to promote Christian social activism in their churches.

The first sermon was entitled "Why We Can't Wait Any Longer" (2nd Kings 6:24-29). This sermon addresses the need for people in power to have scapegoats for whatever situation poor people find themselves in. Poor people are blamed for many of the ills in society and they have been demonized by those who control the economic resources in America. This sermon reminds the hearers that those in control have deemed some people in America expendable. There is a famine in the land, people are expendable and those in power have refused to help. The highlight of the sermon takes place when the king tells the woman to let the Lord help her with her situation. See Appendix D for the sermon outline.

The second sermon is entitled "When A Dead Man Speaks" (Hebrews 11:4). This sermon is an attempt to highlight the need for pastors to speak out about the oppressive conditions which exist in this community. The researcher posits that economics are at the root of many of the social problems in America. The economic and social agenda of those in power is fashioned to make sure disinvestment and disenfranchisement is normative and pervasive in the African-American community. The challenge for the church is to make sure it does not become a part of the problem, but remains the solution for those caught in this power struggle. See Appendix D for the sermon outline.

The lectures for the seminars used chapter three as the outline for a discussion of social justice as a paradigm for ministry. The first seminar used chapter five of the Book of Amos as the resource for the discussion from the Old Testament perspective. Amos was used because it addresses the totality of the African-American's personal struggle, over the Old Testament idea of a divine mandate for social justice. Amos reminded the pastors that there will be a day of judgment for the oppressors, and also a day of redemption for the oppressed.

The second seminar used Luke 4:18-19 as the New Testament Biblical mandate for social justice. The pastors were reminded that Jesus Christ embodies the mission of God to the people God. The text suggests to hearers that they will be free from sin and second-class citizenship and whatever else which has fostered their historical disillusionment. Jesus tells the structural powers of the synagogue that change is coming. The poor will receive some good news, the captives will be released, the blind will see again, and the oppressed will be liberated. These lessons were gleaned from chapter three.

The researcher also invited the Rev. Dr. Walter Malone Jr., the pastor of Canaan Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky to speak to the conference members. Dr. Malone came to Milwaukee to follow the objective that had been given to him as it relates to social justice and economic empowerment as a biblical mandate for the African-American church. A four-hour seminar was planned, followed by lunch for the day-time session, and the night time session included preaching from one of the social justice texts, which Dr. Malone did.

Dr. Malone conducted the seminar on economic empowerment and social justice on May 28, 1997 for the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors. Malone suggested to the pastors that "economic empowerment and social justice go hand in hand and should be the mission and mandate for the Black Church".[19] Dr. Malone went on to posit that empowerment and emancipation are interconnected, and our parishioners will never experience freedom and justice without the economic component. This idea of church economic development is important because our communities are controlled by people he called "gatekeeper".[20] These gatekeepers are described by Dr. Malone as being white and male. Malone also posits that the synergy for economic development must come from the Black church, and

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[19] Walter Malone, seminar, 28 May 1997.

[20] Ibid.

the challenge for the Black church is to prevent the gatekeepers from gaining control over the Black Church.

Malone believed that the nexus for the revival of the African-American community must begin with Community Development Corporations, which are federal government certified 501C.3 programs. There are a number programs at the Canaan Baptist Church in Louisville which operate as federally certified Community Development Programs. They include a computer training program, a job training program, and a housing redevelopment. The housing development program has built single family three bedroom houses in the African-American historic area called Russelville. The other component of Canaan's economic empowerment program is a business training program. The business training program promotes the development of African-American businesses in the Louisville community.

Dr. Malone told us "that there are no accidents in developing ministries".[21] The foundation for ministry development at the Canaan Church are tithes and offerings. Since tithes and offerings are foundational, his challenge is to engender support beyond the tithe for ministry development and economic development. The members of the Dr. Malone's church give the tithe plus these two offerings: Dare to Dream which is twelve dollars and CDC which is seven dollars. The Dare to Dream offering supports the church's ministry development and the CDC offering supports the church's economic development. Dr. Malone reminded us that "money is about power, leveraging power with banks and other entities churches do business with".[22]

The last component of Dr. Malone's seminar addressed preaching for social change. Dr. Malone posits that "preaching is about raising consciousness and the model of the church is to be ministers to their communities."[23] He went on to say we are not

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[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

called or saved to sit down in church and lament the condition of the world. We have been saved and called to serve those in our respective communities, understanding that Jesus Christ lived a life of service. Dr. Malone also articulated a need for pastors to become visionaries and for them to prepare people for the job of doing ministry. Dr. Malone stated that the number one job of a pastor is the "development of people consciousness".[24]

The researcher surveyed eight people out of the fifteen who attended, which included the researcher and his consultant. They came out of the seminar agreeing that there was a biblical mandate for social justice and they were interested in the church doing more to address these justice issues. One of the respondents suggested that churches should "provide family assistance in helping people budget their money, provide adult day care and child care".[25] Another respondent believed the church "should establish businesses to insure the economic wellbeing of neighborhoods".[26] Another respondent wanted the church to "become more involved in the political system, using the ballot to bring about change".[27] One of the respondents wanted the church to "start schools and become involved in every aspect of people's lives".[28] Another respondent wanted the church to "create better housing in the neighborhoods".[29] One of the respondents wanted the church to "work on crime in the neighborhood".[30] Another respondent wanted the church to become "more involved in job training because a shop was closing in his neighborhood and he wanted to keep it open".[31]

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Anonymous, seminar participant.
[26] Anonymous, seminar participant.
[27] Anonymous, seminar participant.
[28] Anonymous, seminar participant.
[29] Anonymous, seminar participant.
[30] Anonymous, seminar participant.
[31] Anonymous, seminar participant.

Those who attended the seminar were responsive to the church taking an active role in social justice issues after the seminar. They said they believed Christians were supposed to feed the hungry and provide clothes for the poor. But after the seminar he knew that we could do more to transform society. The researcher believes that there is opportunity for the pastors to use the laity to work for social justice. Those people the researcher talked to exhibited no reluctance when they discussed social justice and economic empowerment for the church and through the church.

There was consensus among the pastor-preachers when they said they believed in social justice, when they said they believed in empowering the community, and when they said they believed the church should have a prominent role in advocating for social justice in this city. But they failed to attend the main seminar which featured someone who could enhance their methodology in relationship to the church's stewardship of social justice issues. When one assesses the respondents' answers to the biblical mandate social justice question, it appears on the surface that they are adherents to the principles of social justice, but their practice is not consistent with their proclamation.

On the other hand, when one assesses their actions on biblical mandate social justice issues, they contradict the principles of social justice. James Leary, one of the consultants, reminded the researcher that biblical faith is belief, knowledge, intellect, experience, and *trust lived out*. Biblical faith is productive, and one can see the evidence in tangible ways. James 2:17 reads "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead". The behavior of these African-American churches reveal a body which talks about the biblical mandate for social justice, but does not demonstrate it in their ministries or mission. Matthew 7:20 says, "Therefore by their fruits you will know them". The fruits in the church context are ministries of social outreach for the aged, youth activities, anti-substance abuse, affordable housing, and HIV-AIDS.

When one analyzes and compares the data provided by the questionnaire under the heading "What are the most common problems affecting your membership" and

"What community ministries are run by the church", the data shows a lack of conformity and connection to the pathologies of the community. The needs of the people: namely jobs, lack of home ownership, inner city violence, family and marital crises, economics, unemployment, drugs, and education, are unserved or undeserved. The available ministries are geared toward maintenance and the problems reflect a need for liberation. Biblically speaking, the people are asking for "bread" and receiving "stones".

There are some valuable lessons that were learned from these pastors in the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference. They surprised the researcher with their willingness to complete the questionnaire. Maybe it was because they understood the data was important and would be handled with the utmost integrity and confidentiality. The researcher did not request a scriptural quote from the pastors on the questionnaire, but the pastors still surprised the researcher when some of them neglected quoting scripture passages which illustrate a biblical mandate for social justice. Most, if not all of them disclosed during the researcher's seminars that they had preached from the books of Amos, Daniel, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The Psalms speak of God being the God of justice. All of them know about Luke 4: 18-21, which talks about Jesus and his commitment to liberation and justice. The life of Jesus is a picture of God sending His Son to an oppressed people, to set them free. The book of Amos has been a primary preaching source for the African-American church throughout its history, and these stories of the justice of God must take wings again.

While the questionnaire indicated there was a clear recognition concerning the responsibility for leading the only true entity of Black life, the local church, to a ministry of social justice, there is reluctance to be moved from recognition to actual engagement of the structures of power. The pastor is the person God has chosen and ordained to lead the people, and as I see it he or she must acquiesce and approbate to the Lord in this matter. As a matter of fact the pastor has the position, place, and pulpit to communicate the urgency of this kind of ministry to the people God has called him or her to serve.

The researcher believes social justice is discussed and revealed through preaching and teaching, and though ministers modeling the behavior of Jesus Christ while living in the midst of those who are oppressed. Those pastor-preachers who responded to the questionnaire indicate a need for social justice and articulated a role for the church. From their responses there appears to be a need for this type of ministry in their churches. All of the churches are inner city churches, and Milwaukee's inner city has a pathology common to many of the other metropolitan areas in America.

Since the pathology of this city is similar to other urban cities in this country, this city's parishioners are generally poor in the midst of a time of great riches and material prosperity. Major crime and corruption are at an all-time high. Black unemployment is systemic, and suffering is pandemic. Now is the propitious moment for the African-American pulpit to speak. When they speak, others will follow them. The people have always followed their religious leaders and rallied in times such as these. Pastors are the persons God has chosen to eradicate the structural and systemic oppression which disconnects African Americans from truly experiencing social justice. This questionnaire validated the continuing need for social justice in the African-American community.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Statement of Reflection

The responses from the questionnaires, the seminars, and to the sermons suggest that most pastors are **proclaimers** of social justice, but only a few are **practitioners** of social justice. The relevant question for the researcher to consider is how to turn the proclaimers into practitioners of social justice. Obviously, bringing in a renowned social justice practitioner did not move this group of pastors from proclamation to practice. There was an affirmation of the principle, but no rush to action.

The process showed that sermonic interaction was more effective in moving the pastoral leaders from proclamation to practice of a social justice ministry. Out of the preaching of God's Word, after just one sermon this church decided to join in a protest over the racial discrimination of a female worker at the Internal Revenue Service in downtown Milwaukee. The pastor commented to the researcher that his sermon had lifted him high enough to challenge the system which was affecting his member.

The researcher believes that there are three critical dynamics involved in reversing this terrible trend in the African-American church. First, a pastor-preacher has to reassess and redefine her or his basic theological construct, and this must be done in their ministry context. Trying to replicate someone else's program from somewhere else can be problematic if contextual integrity is not used.

So the task of the minister is to hear what God is saying in their context, to see what God is doing in their context, to determine how the people of God respond to God, and look for ways for the people to connect with and join God in their ministry context. Any theologian, and pastors are theologians, listens for the voice of God to offer direction in their ministry. And most of the time God sends the message for one's ministry through the needs of the people they serve.

For social justice ministry to be effective one must first listen to what God is saying in your ministry context, disseminate the information, and impart the mission to the people. There are essentially two ways to impart the mission of ministry to a congregational context. The first is a theological construct where the pastor-preacher uses a psychological approach. A psychological approach is one radical way of using **human development** to address the mandate for mission in the church. The psychological approach is when the pastoral leader emphasizes the total human development of the person for the task of ministry.

Assuming personal responsibility for your actions is a personal and subjective process. How you live your life inside and outside of the worshipping community is a matter of Christian social responsibility. Each person must act as a change agent in their social or nonsocial setting, with special emphasis on human virtue, prioritizing solid values, and exercising some control over your personal situation and circumstances. The proponents of this theological construct use sermons as vehicles for challenging and changing people, and they believe that transforming the person is the foremost call of Jesus Christ. Within this theological construct the mission of the church, which is proclamation, conversion, nurture, and outreach can be accomplished.

In the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference, the researcher has made this observation during the course of several years, and has determined that the psychological approach is their preferred paradigm for ministry. The researcher has heard each person in this survey group preach four or five times during the last three years. The

psychological approach is not necessarily a conservative approach, but it can be problematic if the structural feature of personal pain and struggle is overlooked or devalued.

There is often a tendency to tout personal responsibility while underestimating the power and presence of structural evil, which can negate personal control. This is where the pastor-preachers who use the psychological approach must acknowledge and take action to confront the social systems which stand in the way of people fully achieving personal responsibility. Those who use this approach cannot act as if social barriers to personal responsibility do not exist. This is where leaders must be extremely careful when they listen to God speaking through the needs of our people.

But while the psychological approach is vital, and the transformation of human pathologies are essential, it is my belief that the goal is to transform the social pathologies and structures by the power of Jesus Christ. So the second theological construct is a sociological approach, and there are pastor-preachers in this survey context who use this approach. The sociological approach is when the pastor-preacher uses **social development** to address the mandate for mission of the church. The sociological approach recognizes that social injustice is institutional, structural, inhumane, immoral, evil, and sinful. It also understands that social justice can never be achieved unless there is social structural change or transformation. The sociological approach spiritually discerns that the struggle is "against principalities and against powers" which occupy the landscape known as America.

The controlling dynamic in the lives and ministries of Martin Luther King Jr., Wyatt Tee Walker, Otis Moss, Samuel D. Proctor, Jesse Jackson, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner is the practice of Christian social ministry. This social ethic has led to the development of organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating

Committee (SNCC). These personalities and the organizations behind them were formed to bring about social change and liberation on the principalities and powers that exist in this social context here in America.

The role of the sociological approach is not to release people from their moral and ethical requirements and personal responsibilities. But it must be used to realign personal responsibility in juxtaposition with evil and sin in high places. The sociological approach is also informed by proclamation, which is theologically sound preaching that is informed by and governed by listening to God and telling people in a relevant and responsible way: repentance, which is bringing others to the cause of Christ; nurture, which is feeding, watering, sheltering, and growing what God has planted inside of people; and outreach, going after those who are different and difficult, those who are operating outside of the body of believers.

This mandate for ministry, the sociological approach, does not seek to trivialize human development, but it does present a multidimensional paradigm, which the researcher feels is more conducive to change in an increasingly urbanized and ghettoized society. The sociological approach is the praxis which the researcher feels is better suited to eradicate the structural and systemic sin which make social justice an illusion for African-Americans in the Diaspora. Some of the pastor-preachers in the Milwaukee context use this approach.

Some of the respondents to this survey use both the psychological and the sociological approach in their ministries. These theological constructs are used intermittently and interchangeably as the need arises. This is not troubling, but one must make sure that all who are involved know that they must first listen to what God is saying, and then tell the people what they have heard in ways they can understand and participate in. All of the respondents are pastors of inner city churches, churches where an ungodly amount of suffering and social disappointment is taking place; churches which face the cruel consequences of a downsized, outsized, out-placed, global economy,

which have become the new poster person for pervasive endemic injustice. The important proposition for the researcher is not so much what your theological construct is, but whether you have a vision for the church of Jesus Christ in your contextual setting, in light of the structural evil in your context.

Secondary questions revolve around the mission of the church. Have you translated your vision for the church into a mission statement? Do you understand that the mission statement is the stated purpose of the church, and it is what drives the local church? Is your ministry trust clear and concise in your mission statement? And has your mission statement been articulated and disbursed to each and every member of your local congregation?

Theological constructs are important instruments for pastor-preachers, and they are reflective of the depth of understanding pastor-preachers have of Jesus Christ. Much of the suffering during Jesus' day came from injustice and unfairness; much of the suffering today comes from injustice and unfairness. If a pastor really believes in a biblical mandate for social justice, it will be manifested in his or her lifestyle. Everyone who has ever met Wyatt Tee Walker knows that he stands for, lives for, fights for, and argues for social justice. It's a part of his persona, his preaching, his teaching, and his being. There is a permanent identification with Wyatt Tee Walker's name and social justice issues.

His authenticity shines through even if you have just met him. His work is a monument to his tenacity for the causes of social justice: the worship facility in Harlem, the housing projects in Harlem, the books he has written, the jobs he has created through a travel agency and catering service are all a testimonial to his lifelong fight against injustice. Jesse Jackson is another one who has stood for social justice as a student protester, civil rights worker, black nationalist fire-brand, human rights activist, moral advocate, grassroots leader, and presidential candidate. Everything he has done has been for social justice in his community and context .

All of the pastor-preachers in this survey affirmed social justice as a biblical mandate and expressed an understanding that the church has a role in making social justice a reality. It appears that they want to make these "dry bones live" again, because they use words like protesting, speaking out, advocacy, liberation, oppression, ignored cries, and victimization. There is surely a desire for social justice, but there seems to be some kind of disconnection between the conceptual and the real.

The researcher believes that tradition plays an important part in a pastor's perception of social justice ministries. Old traditional churches have more of a maintenance mentality than some of the newer ministries. It is often hard to get traditional churches moving in the direction of advocating and fighting for justice, choosing activist leaders, coordinating, facilitating, developing, and implementing these kinds of ministries which have a socially significant impact on the community. There are other inherent problems in traditional church settings, where the role of pastor is often challenged by the church's image of themselves, their position in the community, and their requests and requirements for pastoral leadership. Often the pastor-preacher is challenged as leader of the congregation, by boards and others who have filled the power vacuum before he or she came aboard.

These problems with the traditional churches limiting their roles in the social justice arena can be overcome if the pastor has an outstanding sense of self perception, works to become the true leader of the church, does not become entangled in church politics, and has some financial freedom. Financial freedom can engender at least two things. First, if the pastor's financial compensation paid by the church is enough to live on, then he or she can devote all of his or her energies to the mandate and mission of the church. Financial freedom can ensure independent decision making when the time comes for decision making in the church.

Other hindrances to developing a social justice ministry from a pastoral context generally revolve around security issues. Is the person secure in their leadership position

at the church? Does the pastor have the personal autonomy to preach or teach whatever God speaks to him or her about? Then there are some self-imposed limitations on effective social justice ministry. Sometimes a leader will think his or her church is too small to make a significant difference. They will feel encumbered by a lack of formal theological training, and this could result in a neglected hermeneutic.

One of the unresolved problems the researcher has observed in the Milwaukee context is this flirtation with conservative evangelical Christians and their literature. It has been the researcher's observation that because something is advertised as Christian, doesn't mean that it is Christian in an African-American context. The researcher further posits that white conservative Christian literature should not be used in an African-American church context, without a critical assessment of the material. Christian literature which neglects the social implications of Jesus Christ's ministry are not useful for the African-American church. It says Christian African-Americans are not obligated to listen to it, watch it, read it, because they may become subconsciously influenced by it.

The pastor-preachers in this context would argue they are not indoctrinated or persuaded by the offerings of the Christian right. But they would rather talk about school prayer in their conversations, while their young members are experiencing such a major classroom shortage that children are meeting in closets, while the school district is trying to lease all the available space it can. They are talking about the so-called "partial birth abortion" and young girls between thirteen and seventeen in this community are having babies at a record pace. Too much time is wasted on non-priority issues, while the real problems of social injustice are slowly choking this community to death.

Conclusion

The conclusion incorporates some suggestions which the researcher believes can be a praxis for a concise and comprehensive social justice ministry. This dissertation is called "Embodying Praxis: How to Improve Social Justice Practices in the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference", and the context is a group of pastor-preachers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin who belong to an organization called the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference. These persons pastor churches in the inner city of Milwaukee, which suffers from the same problems of hopelessness, crime, drug abuse, joblessness, systemic institutional racism, redlining, isolation, segregation, political disenfranchisement, and disinvestment seen in most of the major cities in this country.

This researcher has attempted to look at churches in Milwaukee through the minds and eyes of the pastors as it relates to social justice as a biblical mandate. The results of the survey suggests that these pastor-preachers have a fundamental belief in social justice as biblical mandate, but it is not a functional belief. They appear to be proclaimers of social justice, but only a few are practitioners of social justice. The survey also suggests that there is not a strong correlation between their established ministries and the problems their parishioners face in their daily lives. The ministries found in these churches, which are typically traditional churches, are ministries of maintenance rather than ministries of liberation.

Hopefully this dissertation will help to challenge these ministers to move from maintenance to liberation, from complaining to constructive engagement, from reaction to someone else's agenda to pro action with their own agenda, as they face these increasingly complicated issues and concerns of their worshipping community. As a part of the conclusion, the researcher suggests four critical areas which should be addressed in the African-American churches of Milwaukee, if they are interested in improving their social justice practices.

A. Develop A Mission Statement

The researcher discovered during this process that one of the most effective social justice pastors in the context has a comprehensive mission statement. The researcher concluded that if a social justice ministry is to be effective, its foundation must be in the formulation of a trenchant mission statement. This mission statement does not happen to ministers like it happened to Moses when he received the Ten Commandments. God does not call preachers out to a mountain, meet with them, and send them back to the people with the mission statement. The mission statement is a participatory endeavor, and the whole congregation must be allowed to help with the formulation of this critical device. It is strongly recommended that the mission statement be passionately interwoven with the church's mandate for social justice.

This can be accomplished by talking about your ideas about social justice, praying about your ideas about social justice, and preaching about your ideas about social justice. This strategy should take place in the months leading up to the development of the mission statement so the people can appropriate the ideas as their own. The power of suggestion is surely at play in this vital endeavor.

Remember the mission statement is a purpose statement revealing why your church or ministry is in existence. The mission statement is not a static document. It is often evolving because the church is evolving. Mission statements are not intended to be carved in stone, so when you sense a change in your context, let the church review and revamp their mission statement. This exercise is intended to show pastoral leaders that their mission or purpose statement should belong to the members of their congregations. If their ownership is not established, there will be constant reminders that the mission statement is yours instead of theirs.

The mission for the church and the mandate for social justice is inexplicably interwoven. The Bible reveals that Jesus Christ came to a suffering, oppressed, and evil world with the intended purpose of setting the people free. Jesus announces His manifestation, mission and mandate in Luke 4:18-19. When we hold the mission and mandate of Jesus Christ in juxtaposition with the mission statement of the local church, there should be a correlation and a continuance of purpose and product. If the mission statement of the church is not parallel with the mission intent of Jesus Christ, it has no relevance, purpose or power as a transformation instrument in a world filled with greed and unfaithful governance.

B. Cultivate Liberation Theology

The researcher also discovered that the two most effective pastors who brought proclamation and practice together were Black liberation theologians. The researcher believes one cannot speak of social justice without an examination of liberation theology in context. The respondents to this survey mentioned in some of their responses, the church as a vehicle for liberation. When the researcher compared this type of response to their compendium of service ministries, projects, and programs, it suggests that some of these colleagues are not totally clear on what is social justice and what is liberation theology. In the opinion of this researcher, all theology is done for a particular time and place and is addressed to a specific audience.

Liberation theology in this context is for African-Americans, and it recognizes that Jesus Christ is central in the fight for justice in an unjust society. Black liberation theology is about addressing Black suffering and pain in a contextual setting and equipping African Americans to take responsibility for their own lives and destiny. Black liberation theology is not about doing for others; it is about empowering people to

do for themselves, where they can facilitate their own justice. Black liberation theology is existential as well as contextual because it is a product of the uniqueness of the Black experience. If the church today is to have an effective social justice ministry, its theological language and methods must become synchronized and in symphony with a practical theology whose function is to liberate the church from the forces of social, political and economic injustice.

Liberation theology also helps the church to move beyond the power politics of the church, beyond the fruitless questions of internal authority and power, beyond the evangelistic paradigm in the so-called "Word" churches. The researcher calls these kind of churches, "churches in black face" because they are patterned after the Billy Grahams, Pat Robertsons, and the Robert Schullers of the world. Without liberation theology one can never ensure that they will have social justice, because liberation theology provides a theoretical framework for social justice.

C. Proclaim Social Justice

The researcher also discovered that the first step from proclamation to practice was effective social justice preaching. The disparities between the ministries of the churches and the problems the people faced in the survey, suggest that there is some hermeneutical work needed. Contextually speaking, if the pulpit of the church is liberated, then it understands that sin and salvation are both personal and social. One cannot separate the teaching of Jesus from the social context of His day, just like preachers cannot separate their preaching from the social ramifications of the inner city communities they have been called by God to serve. So their hermeneutic, their interpretation of the Biblical text must be influenced by their politics, life experiences, and their cultural context.

If the pastor-preacher is liberated by black liberation theology, then the pew also becomes liberated. Ministers have to be careful of what they proclaim. Jesse Jackson summed up the dynamics of some African American pulpits when he said "My people, let Pharaoh go."[1] Too many preachers are more captivated with Egypt than with the Promised Land. In the African-American Church the pulpit has always determined the direction of the pews, and a Black liberation pulpit has a Black liberation pew.

If one could design a theology of preaching, its praxis would be found in preachers preaching from the Bible just the way it was written. The researcher would posit that the Bible was written from the perspective of the oppressed, and he would require that the preachers in his context throw away all of their books by the old masters. Matthew Henry's commentary and Dakes' Annotated Bible are good examples. These kind of books are useless in the inner city of Milwaukee, because they are written from a position of power, and the people they preach to on Sundays are normally powerless.

And if they have gone to school, they would be requested to reexamine their seminary experience, and discard all of the irrelevant ideas they have acquired from that experience. They would be reminded that before there was a Bible, God was. Before there was a written word of God, the theologians of that day just told the story. African-American people understand storytelling; they understand that God was, before their foreparents could read and write. They understand that the story must be told with clarity, cohesiveness, and conviction.

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[1] Michael Eric Dyson, Race Rules: Navigating the Color Line (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), 6.

D. Recognize the Implications for African American Preachers in the 21st Century

The twenty-first century pastor-preachers will be preaching to a different generation of church people. Their congregations will be largely made up of baby boomers and busters. These new generations of church people understand that God has intersected their lives at a different point, and they expect their pastoral leaders to deal in specific realities instead of generalities. In the new millennium pastor-preachers will be called on to be a part of and direct a leadership team. This next generation of church people are extremely talented, and they must be allowed to let their intelligence impact ministry in new and vibrant ways. The pastor-preachers in the Milwaukee context must take seriously the task of empowering the people to make change in their context, and change in the social, political, and economic structure of their church and adjacent community.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONTEXT ASSOCIATES

1. The Rev. Floyd Jones
   Greater Bethlehem B.C.
   1457 N. 35th St
   Milwaukee WI 53208

2. The Rev. Samuel Jones
   Greater Galilee B.C.
   2432 N. Teutonia Ave.
   Milwaukee, WI 53206

3. The Rev. John W. McVicker
   Christ The King B.C.
   4422 W. Leon Terrace
   Milwaukee, WI 53216

4. The Rev. Charles Thornhill
   Mt. Moriah B.C.
   2747 N. 4th St
   Milwaukee, WI 53212

5. The Rev. Robert Harris
   Tabernacle Community B.C.
   2500 W. Medford Ave.
   Milwaukee, WI 53206

6. The Rev. John Kelvin Patterson
   Mt. Olive Baptist Church
   5277 N. 36th St.
   Milwaukee, WI 53209

7. The Rev. Joe H. Games
   Providence Baptist Church
   2429 W. Hampton
   Milwaukee, WI 53209

8. The Rev. Russell B. Williamson
   Zion Hill Baptist Church
   1825 W Hampton Ave.
   Milwaukee, WI 53209

9. The Rev. Louis Sibley
   Mt. Zion B.C.
   2207 N. 2nd St
   Milwaukee, WI 53212

10. The Rev. Dr. Roy B. Nabors
    Community Baptist Church
    4311 W. North Ave.
    Milwaukee, WI 53208

APPENDIX B

CONFERENCE MEMBERS

1. The Rev. Dr. E. Frank Bridges
Canaan M.B.C.
2964 N 11th
Milwaukee, WI 53206

2. The Rev. Fred L. Crouther
New Covenant M.B.C.
2315 N. 38th
Milwaukee, WI 53210

3. The Rev. Freddie L. Harper
King Solomon M.B.C
2375 N. 4th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53212

4. The Rev. Archie Ivy
New Hope Baptist Church
2464 W. Atkinson Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53209

5. The Rev. Joseph Jackson
Evergreen Baptist Church
1138 W. Center
Milwaukee, WI 53206

6. The Rev. Dr. James Leary
Calvary Baptist Church
2959 N. Teutonia
Milwaukee, WI 53206

7. The Rev. Anthony Lester
Blessed Deliverance B.C.
15545 Carpenter Rd.
Milwaukee, WI 53005

8. The Rev. R. E. McCrory
St. Luke's Emmanuel B.C.
2722 W. Highland Blvd
Milwaukee, WI 53208

9. The Rev Steven McVicker
Koinonia Baptist Church
3701 N. 35th
Milwaukee, WI 53216

10. The Rev. Lawrence Presley
St. Mary's Baptist Church
8415 W. Bradley Rd.
Milwaukee, WI 53224

11. The Rev. William Robbins
Bethel Baptist Church
2030 W. North Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53205

12. The Rev. Robert L. Sims
Bethesda Baptist Church
2805 W. North Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53208

13. The Rev. A. Desry Smartt
Greater Mt. Zion M.B.C.
2479 N. Sherman Blvd
Milwaukee, WI 53210

14. The Rev. James Spann
Corinth M.B.C.
1874 N. 24th Place
Milwaukee, WI 53205

15. The Rev. Earl L. Thomas
Victory M.B.C.
P. O. Box 11097
Milwaukee, WI 53211

16. The Rev. Willie Wanzo
Metropolitan Baptist Church
1345 W. Burleigh
Milwaukee, WI 53206

17. The Rev. Robert Wilson
St. John United B.C.
2429 W. Hopkins
Milwaukee, WI 53206

18. The Rev. Walter Word
Holy Temple M.B.C.
4245 N. 60th
Milwaukee, WI 53216

APPENDIX C

Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference Survey

Pastor's Name_____

Church's Name_____

Church's Address_____

Age Categories of Pastors: 30 to 39___ 40 to 49___50 to 59___ 60 and above____

1. How many years since your call to preach?_____

2. How many years do you have of pastoral experience?_____

3. How many years of formal education? Less than high school____High School____
Greater than high school_____ Four years of college____
Greater than four years of college_____

4. Characteristics of Your Congregation:
   a. Size_____
   b. What percentage of your membership is male_____female_____
   c. What percentage of your membership do you identify as youth?_____
   d. What percentage of your congregation is: Southern_____ Western_____
   Midwestern_____ North Eastern_____
   e. Average income estimate_____
   f. Approximate percentage of your congregation which struggle to make ends meet?_____
   g. Which of the following categories best describe the predominate social status makeup of your church? High_____ Middle_____ Low_____
   h. What is the most common problem effecting your membership?_____
   _____
   i. What community ministries are run by the church? _____

_____
_____

_____

5. Is your church located in the inner city_____or the outer city_____

6. What does the term social justice mean to you?_____

_____

_____

7. Based on your interpretation of social justice, do you believe that there is a Biblical mandate to support efforts at achieving it?_____

_____

_____

8. How do you view the church's role in assisting social justice?_____

_____

_____

9. Comments:

APPENDIX D

WHY WE CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER
2ND KINGS 6:24-29

Ben-Hadad who was the king of Syria had launched an all-out attack on Israel; and the capitol city which was Samaria at this time, was under a prolonged siege. Samaria was under an intense attack for so long that all of their food supplies were exhausted. This is really a frightful picture; the vast Syrian Armies have surrounded the city, the prevailing policy indicates that nothing is going out and nothing is coming in. There is starvation in the land, the grocery stores, food banks, and the food pantries are empty, the shelters are full of homeless people, and the social agencies are overwhelmed with requests for assistance. The text tells us that the famine in the land was so great that a donkey's head sold for eighty shekels (or a pound of silver), and dove's dung sold for five shekels of silver.

Where this story intersects with the contemporary for me is found in the action of the king of Israel. In a time of famine in the land, the King blamed the prophet Elisha for the trouble in the land.(expand/God's man) Those of us sitting here today understand the blame game which is perpetuated by those in power. Blame the young welfare mothers for the conditions in the community, for the poverty, for the drugs, for the lack of jobs, for the lack of husbands, for all of the social ills which affect our society. Newt blames the archaic tax rules and his ignorance of the laws for his lying to Congress. And then he has the idiocy and the hypocrisy to say "The problem of ignorance should be taken as seriously as race and drugs". Texaco blames the black jelly beans for their hostile work environments. Ebonics are blamed for the dislocation, disinvestment, disenfranchisement

in our public schools, when the real issue per the Education Trust is the lack of a monetary commitment to low income schools.

For every dollar spent in a white school, only 77 cents are spent in an African - American or Latino schools. In the white schools 86% of the science teachers are certified, whereas in our schools 54% are certified to teach science, according to the constitutional liberties organization, People For the America Way. I am sick and tired of the blame game, for it is systemic of the reason why we can no longer wait . There is a famine in the land, and this woman asks the person in power, the king, for help and the king says "No! Let the Lord help you". In the spirit of Martin Luther King, who realized long ago that powers in charge were unwilling to help, this text suggests three principles to me:

1. SUFFERING: Verse 25: "There was a great famine in Samaria" . There is also a great famine in our land, Washington cutbacks, drug treatment programs cutbacks, W2 cutbacks, SSI cutbacks, and with other essential programs for the poor gone, I hear suffering in the voice and see famine on the faces of those who are not equipped to cope with suffering. I see and hear the suffering of racism, sexism, classism, the suffering of generational and pandemic poverty.

The relevant question for the church is whether or not we will accept this idea which is perpetuated by those in control, **that these people are expendable**. (repeat) This idea that people are expendable is not new in our neighborhoods; it had its nexus in the slavery experience. The lynchings, the crack cocaine, the black-on-black crime and high inner-city murder rates, are pathological and systemic indicators that people are expendable. And all of us suffer from this mind-set and mentality, regardless of how well we think we are doing. I have concluded that the suffering which makes sense is the suffering that we do to build lives, the suffering that we do to nurture families, the

suffering that we do to lift up opportunity and equality, the suffering that we do to exalt God and emancipate humanity. (expand)

2. SERVICE: In verse 28: "What is your complaint? She answered, this woman said to me, Give up your son; we will eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow". This verse speaks strongly to me because this has always been the cry of those in power in this country. Give up your son, Crispus Attucks, the seven black Medal of Honor winners, the Buffalo Soldiers, in World War Two, in the Tuskegee experiment, in Korea, and in Vietnam. We are asked to give up our sons to be eaten in the gangs, in drug houses, in prisons, "Give up your son, we will eat him today, and we eat my son tomorrow. We have always given the maximum service for the minimum payback.

We have always been the least, the lost, and the left behind. Dr. King reminded us that Jesus Christ has a different program, Jesus' program as identified in Luke 4:18 was to "heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed". And for all of us who want to get and sing that song: "when we have given the best of our service". We must remember it is not a valid testimony, unless we have worked for justice. (expand)

3. SERIOUSNESS: Some of us sitting here today are involved in serious situations because of the choices we have made during times of famine. I don't know the choices you made and you don't know the choices I have made, but we do know that we all can do funny things in times of famine.

Let me close by telling you Dr. King is gone, but God told me that He still has some prophets and people who have not bowed down in times of famine. God had not forgotten about Israel during these times of famine, and God has not forgotten about us. God told Elisha to tell them in 7:1 **"Hear the word of the Lord".** The Word of God has something to say about sin and evil in high places. The Word assures us that evil is only

for a season. The Word tells us every mountain will be brought low and every valley raised up. The Word says justice will roll down like a mighty stream.

The Word says the last will be first and first will be last. Jesus says the Kingdom of God is at hand. CELEBRATE.

WHEN A DEAD MAN SPEAKS

HEBREWS 11:4

When I examine this 11th chapter of the book of Hebrews, I believe if God had created a Hall of Fame, God would have included all of the people who are mentioned in this chapter. The line-up would include Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, and David. Those of us who are familiar with the function of this chapter understand that its focus is on the FAITH journeys these men and women made, and also how they responded to God's calling and direction. If you would acquiesce and allow me this morning, I would like to add an additional name to this prestigious and prominent list of esteemed individuals who responded by faith to God's calling and direction, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

For those of you who are pondering this appointment and designation, I want you to know that I have shared my opinion with Dr. King's former SCLC executive director, Wyatt Tee Walker, who happens to be my mentor and friend, and he agreed. I have discussed it with Dr. Otis Moss, who helped with the Atlanta demonstrations and he agreed. Footnote: The late Rev. Dr. Kelly Miller Smith, Dean of Vanderbilt's School of Religion and renowned church pastor, was always distressed by the depiction of Dr. King as a slain civil rights leader, because he felt like it did an injustice to how King understood himself. Smith said "It is unfortunate that the press chooses to refer to Dr. King as a slain civil rights leader. This tends to divorce the political from the spiritual or moral, and that is diametrically opposed to the black church's self understanding and modus-operandi. King, in a sense, was the black church and as such, should not be dichotomized. In truth, he was a martyred prophet who was killed for doing what

prophets do. He was simply working for human rights against the efforts of oppressors; the struggle was against evil, it was against sin",[2] end of quote.

Contextually speaking, King's effort was to abolish oppression, and God calls prophetic voices to dismantle and demolish oppression. It is in this context that this dead man still speaks today, look at the prevailing conditions we face today. Texaco has problems with its so-called "black jelly beans". Newt Gingrich's agenda includes putting black folk back in their place, by any means possible, including lying and dishonesty. Disinvestment, dislocation and disenfranchisement is normative for our schools and this pathology is lost in the debate about Ebonics. Our community generates billions of dollars in buying power, and we don't manufacture anything but excuses. Regardless of all of this, I still heard Martin Luther King, Jr., who is dead, but still speaking and today he is saying three things to the black church, the only institution that is wholly owned by us.

1. DON'T GET CAUGHT IN THE ECONOMICS OF AFFLUENCE. In the twenty nine years since King died many of us have become caught up in the economics of affluence. By definition, the economics of affluence happens when we become so well off that the pain of those we left behind is no longer noticed or reacted to. It happens when we move up and move out, when we become the HNIC, "the Head Negro In Charge", and we forget about those who are still left in the situation we think that we have overcome. Amazingly, the economics of affluence manifests itself in other ways; it gives some of us a disease that I call the"Moses syndrome" or "Moses complex". You do remember the calling of Moses; it's all in chapters three and four of Exodus? Well, when the Lord called Moses, which is a call to religious action, God gave him all the tools he would need to accomplish the task, and told him to go tell Pharaoh to let my people go.

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[2] Smith, Kelly Miller, Social Crisis Preaching (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 11.

Moses said "I am slow of speech and slow of tongue". Moses, educated in Pharaoh's house, says "Who me, I can't talk". (expand)

2. AVOIDANCE OF THE POLITICS OF OPPRESSION. The politics of oppression is when the cries of the marginal are not heard or they are dismissed as the noise of the lazy, unskilled, uneducated, unmotivated masses. The politics of oppression involves us, the so-called haves, and them-- the have nots. Our positions have been polarized by those in power, those who can influence our thinking. The problem is magnified when we allow the church to become the tool of the oppressor, when we don't want those people who don't look, talk, act, dress, and smell like us, around. When we refuse to provide sanctuary for those who are down, disillusioned, and devastated by the community at large. We can avoid the politics of oppression when we realize that God is still in charge, and Jesus has all power in His hands. (expand)

3. DEVELOP A CREATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS. The creative consciousness of God requires us to remember, the authority of God expects us to answer, and the power of God calls us into a community that cares. Dr. King said in his letter from the Birmingham jail "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their 'Thus saith the Lord' far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid". Church in closing, the relevant question is; "Will you answer the Macedonian call for aid"? CELEBRATE.

APPENDIX E

CONSTITUTION

of the

WISCONSIN BAPTIST PASTORS' CONFERENCE, INC.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this organization shall be THE WISCONSIN BAPTIST PASTORS' CONFERENCE, INC. The principle office of the corporation in the State of Wisconsin shall be in the City and County of Milwaukee.

ARTICLE II

Purpose

The purpose of this conference is to give visible form to that faith and fellowship to which God has called his people. We shall seek through corporate efforts to:

1. Support Christian fellowship through proclamation of the gospel by word and deed.
2. Provide Christian education through nurture, faith, and the principles of Jesus Christ.
3. Encourage human freedom through ministering to the needs of all people.

ARTICLE III

Policy

Section A. Self-governing. The government of this conference is vested in the members who compose it, and, as such, it is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical organization. Also, none of its committees or officers shall usurp its executive governmental or policy-making powers without approval of the membership.

Section B. Membership. Membership in this conference is open to all Wisconsin Baptist pastors without regard to race, creed, color, sex or national origin.

ARTICLE IV

Officers

Section A. Scope. The elected officers of this conference shall be President, Vice President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, and Devotional Leader. All officers are elected for a two (2) year term.

Section B. President. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Conference and act as Conference of special meetings and committees of the Conference. He shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and task forces of the Conference. He shall countersign all requisitions for the disbursement of funds from the Conference's treasury. He shall perform such other functions and exercise further member duties as may be voted upon from time to time by the Conference.

Section C. Vice President. The Vice President shall preside at meetings of the Conference in the absence of the President or when directed by the President. He shall serve as the Program Chairman of the Conference. He shall perform such other duties and exercise further duties as may be voted upon from time to time by the Conference.

Section D. Secretary. The Secretary shall keep a complete record of the transaction of all meetings of the Conference. These shall be read for approval at the next following meeting of the Conference. He shall keep a record of the names, addresses, and telephone numbers with dates of admission to the Conference. He shall notify all officers of the Conference of special meetings, elections and appointments. He shall deliver immediately to his successor all books and records for which he has been responsible as Secretary.

Section E. Assistant Secretary. The Assistant Secretary shall perform all the duties of the Secretary in his absence. He shall serve as the Membership Chairman of the Conference. He shall perform such other duties and exercise further duties as may be voted upon from time to time by the Conference.

Section F. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall be the fiscal and distributing agent of the Conference. He is responsible for the following:

1. Receiving all funds belonging to the Conference
2. Holding custody of the funds of the Conference and all the deposits made in the name of the Conference.
3. Depositing all funds coming into his possession in such depositories as may be designated by the Conference.
4. Having custody of the securities, investments, title papers, and other valuable documents of the Conference.
5. Submitting itemized reports of all receipts and disbursements, showing the actual financial condition of the Conference semi-annually and annually.

6. Delivering immediately to his successor all books and records for which he has been responsible as Treasurer.

Section G. Devotional Leader. The Devotional Leader, or his appointee, shall lead all the devotion periods of this Conference. He shall perform such other duties and exercise further duties as may be voted upon from time to time by the Conference.

Section H. Other Officers. The Conference shall elect other officers it deems necessary from time to time.

ARTICLE V
Meetings

Section A. Weekly Meetings. This Conference shall meet weekly on Mondays at 10:00 a.m. at a place designated by the Conference to carry out the purpose for which it was organized and any other business it deems necessary.

Section B. Annual Meetings. The Conference shall hold its Annual Business Meeting on the first Monday in December, beginning in 1984, for the purpose of election of officers and such other business that it deems necessary. The time for the annual meeting is 10:00 a.m.

Section C. Quorum. One-third (1/3) the membership of this Conference who is in good standing shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business of this Conference.

ARTICLE VI

Signatures on Checks

The three authorized signatures to appear on checks drawn from accounts of this Conference are the Treasurer, President and Secretary. Two signatures are required on all checks; the Treasurer's signature must always be one of these two signatures.

ARTICLE VII
Conference Year

The fiscal year of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors' Conference, Inc. shall be the calendar year.

ARTICLE VIII
Rules of Order

The rules and order contained in Robert's Rules of Order Revised shall govern meetings of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors' Conference in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution.

ARTICLE IX

Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at any regular or special meeting of this Conference by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present, qualified and voting provided that any proposed amendment shall have been presented in writing at a meeting of the Conference and distributed to all members of the Conference at least two (2) weeks prior to voting upon the amendments by the Conference.

ARTICLE X

Dissolution

In case of dissolution of the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors' Conference, Inc., all assets of the Conference must be distributed to another non-profit religious body.

Date of Constitution
February 20, 1984

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